

Rule of the Beasts

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/35291965) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/35291965>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandoms:	Minecraft (Video Game) , Video Blogging RPF , Dream SMP
Relationships:	Wilbur Soot & Technoblade & TommyInnit & Phil Watson , Wilbur Soot & TommyInnit , Technoblade & TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , TommyInnit & Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Ranboo & TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Toby Smith Tubbo & TommyInnit
Characters:	TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF) , Wilbur Soot , Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Toby Smith Tubbo , Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF)
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Royalty , Hurt/Comfort , Angst , TommyInnit Needs a Hug (Video Blogging RPF) , Implied/Referenced Child Abuse , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Miscommunication , Insecurity , inaccurate politics , I Tried , Written because of a western civ class of all things so , Platonic Relationships , Scared TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Anxiety , Assassination Attempt(s) , Editing is hell
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-11-23 Updated: 2023-03-18 Words: 49,030 Chapters: 11/13

Rule of the Beasts

by [RadioSilencer](#)

Summary

With two countries teetering on the edge of war, their kings attempt one last negotiation to ensure peace. The Antarctic will take a hostage from the SMP's court. Surely, no king would declare war with his son in the enemy hands.

As the youngest prince, Tommy is also the most expendable.

He knows his father doesn't keep his promises.

Notes

(yes, the title is from that "violence for violence in the rule of the beasts" obama thing. my brain is rotting, okay?)

Um, I really don't have an explanation for this, other than school is apparently boring enough to generate fic ideas. Hope you enjoy!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

I'd love to tell you stories but I can't remember how they went

The halls of Tommy's house were cold. It was a given, in a castle that size, that the wings were bound to be a bit chilly, especially since he wasn't in one of the personal chambers, but as of late, less and less effort was being given into keeping the castle warm.

The resources were needed elsewhere, after all.

Not that the royal family didn't still live in luxury, because his family did, just a few things had been cut in order to fuel the war effort. It kept their kingdom safe, Tommy knew, and it helped their soldiers win. Sacrifices were necessary and getting cold in the hallway was hardly a sacrifice anyway.

If the war dragged on, things would get worse, but Tommy's father wouldn't let it get to that.

Surely not.

The halls were lined with tapestries. They showed his family's history-of ships and totems and living, breathing *gods*. Duels and treaties and everything else that had been deemed important. As a bonus, they also insulated the walls a bit. Which, while Tommy had no right to complain, would be even worse otherwise. Tommy didn't do well in the cold.

Tommy tried to straighten up his hair, just a little, before he had to go in to see *him*, but it was useless. No one had ever been successful in fully getting Tommy's hair to tame, and believe him when he said they had had the most talented professionals try. And fail.

Eventually, Tommy gave up. This was the neatest that Tommy was going to look. He could not keep his father waiting.

Dream didn't like to be kept waiting.

Tommy stood alone, with no escort or guards.

Normally, when a guest appeared in front of the court, it was a ... bigger affair. But this was Tommy's *home*, he didn't need to be escorted to the towering doors of the throne room. Formalities would be followed in the throne room, *nothing*, not even Tommy's brothers were more important than following formality in the throne room. Outside of it however, was Tommy's house, he lived here, and how awkward would it be to lead someone around their own home.

Even so, standing at the doors to the throne room made Tommy's heart thud heavily. But he wasn't ... afraid. No, Tommy was a big man, just, well, anyone would be intimidated by what was inside.

He could hear the echo of a courier announcing Tommy's entry to the king, he could hear the scuffle of boots and the creak of the towering doors opening. Light flooded through, and Tommy took a step onto the red carpet that led towards the three thrones of the SMP. He had stepped foot in this room before, but never as an outsider. He did his best to keep calm. Nothing bad was going to happen.

This was his dad. Just because he was in ruler mode (and to be honest, he was pretty much always in ruler mode when he was talking to Tommy), didn't change that.

Gathering his nerves, Tommy continued to walk, before kneeling at the appropriate place and waiting. And waiting. Decorum was everything in this room, formality, a mainstay of being in the presence of the throne.

Tommy was a prince. Even if he wasn't in his father's court very often, this was his domain. He knew what he was doing. He wasn't afraid.

He couldn't be afraid.

Fear was to nobles what blood was to sharks.

“You may rise,” someone finally said, their voice echoing off of the high ceilings and stones. It wasn’t Dream speaking.

There were three people allowed to say that. The king himself, and the two people sitting at his sides.

Tubbo had raised their voice in Dream’s stead, either in pity or just because he didn’t want to see Tommy suffer. Ranboo probably would have spoken, but he wasn’t on the king’s good side at the moment and being around him always knit Ranboo’s lips together

Tommy couldn't blame him. Enough of running his own mouth around Dream had made him silent around the man, rare as it was.

Dream did not like foolish words.

Tommy stood, keeping his eyes drawn to the floor. Decorum, Tommy reminded himself, even though he knew neither of his brothers would mind. Tubbo could care less for the rules of court, only maintaining them because he didn’t want to suffer the wrath of his father if he didn’t. And Ranboo, much the same.

Tommy was rarely on the receiving end of such formalities, and was rarely called to court. Either throne on his father’s side could be his, if the situation called for it (though situations rarely called for the third son, the youngest, the furthest from the throne. What were the chances that two princes would fall in succession, once they survived the trials of early childhood?). Either way, he disliked them.

Tubbo and Ranboo were his *brothers*, it felt wrong to be separated from them like this.

He wanted to be beside them, not have judgement passed by them.

“Come closer, please,” Tubbo requested, but it sounded almost like a plea. Huh. Tubbo didn’t usually speak this much in the throne room. As the heir, Tubbo had the most right to

speak in the room anyway, but didn't usually do it. But for whatever reason, it seemed that Dream was being lenient today. It probably had to do with the odd circumstances that led to this whole thing in the first place. It wasn't often that one of the members of the royal family was called in front of court as if they were a commoner.

Tommy could feel everyone's eyes on him, although he wasn't sure if Dream was really watching the proceedings or not. The nobles in court today had their eyes glued to Tommy. It was unsettling.

A hushed word rose from the throne, and although Tommy couldn't hear what was spoken (no one, but the three seated at the thrones could), it was Dream. It was his father. It was the king.

He wasn't known for speaking quietly, and it made Tommy tremble.

"We cannot have a conversation from there, your highness. At least let him get close enough to hear us." Ah, good old Tubbo.

"Very well. Prince Theseus, come forward." And finally, Tommy saw his brothers. Tubbo looked like he was about to cry for some reason, although he was holding it at bay by a string, probably only by his resolve and the strict training Dream had his heir under. Ranboo was actually crying, face burning where his tears fell and he attempted to keep them off of him but also not dirty his clothes.

Oh god.

What had happened? If his brothers were crying, it was so much worse than anything Tommy had been imagining before. A far off thread, a possibility, an unknown was scary, but something that made his brothers *cry*? Tommy wanted to make it go away, whatever it was.

Tommy still didn't look at Dream. He really couldn't stand to see his father's face yet. It would hurt, what if he was crying as well. What if he *wasn't*.

Desperately, Tommy wanted to run to each of them and shout and make them smile and make whatever was making them cry go away, but there was a small distance and centuries of tradition standing in the way.

“Prince Theseus, I’m sure that you are aware of our ongoing war with the badlands.” Dream continued on without waiting for an answer from Tommy. He was a king, and he didn’t need one. “You are aware that we cannot take another war. The economy would collapse. Simply speaking, *Theseus*, we cannot afford to be on bad terms with our neighbors.”

Oh, this was bad, much worse than Tommy had expected. Dream did not like to admit when his country was failing, when *he* was failing. If Dream was openingly admitting that in front of his own court, then Tommy was not going to hear good news. Not that he was expecting it anyways.

“Yes your highness,” Tommy said, realizing that Dream expected an answer this time.

“Our relations with the Antarctic Empire have been ... strained for a while, as I assume you are aware.” Tommy was. While he may not be very important in the line of the kingdom, he was still a prince, with all the responsibilities and privileges of one. Besides, it wasn’t like Tubbo or Ranboo were going to keep secrets from him.

Not even Dream could tear them apart.

Relations with the empire had been strained in the past years and had gradually grown worse.

“Part of my attempt in this war with country has been to keep all three of my princes at home, as you are all too young and inexperienced in battle to be much use, regardless.” Tommy nodded, before thinking through whether or not that was a disrespectful response. It was customary to go to war with your subjects, to lead them, but they hadn’t yet. Most chalked it up to their age, and of course, it would be unreasonable for everyone to go and leave no one left to reign as heir if all others were to perish.

“However, Theseus, I’m sure you are also aware that war and peace both require sacrifice.” Although the throne room was one of the places that the castle was actually keeping heated at the moment, Tommy felt cold everywhere.

Tommy wished he was still in the hallway. Dream kept talking, and Tommy did his best to listen, because this conversation was going to spell out his life from now on.

A sick pit grew in his stomach. He really really didn’t like the way this conversion was turning.

“The Antarctic Empire has graciously agreed to host you,” Dream said, as if this whole thing were a good thing, and really, for the sake of the country, wasn’t it? *This was the best solution. This is the best case scenario. I- sacrifices are important to the country. This is little more than a sacrifice like stopping the heating in the grand scheme of things. I will be alright.* Somehow, it didn’t sound convincing even in his own head. “A show of goodwill, if you will. Security. You will be safe, and they will see to your education and training as a prince from the time you arrive until our peace is secured.” Tommy hadn’t been able to spend a lot of time with his father, but he knew him well.

Peace would never be secured.

Tommy knew his father. Dream was keeping war at bay for now, because he was still fighting the badlands. But that war would end, and Dream would ... Dream was very interested in expanding his empire. Peace was a means to an end for Dream.

And Tommy may not know the king of the Antarctic Empire, but he knew of the legends surrounding him. They called him the Angel of Death, in some lands, and although the name might sound overly pompous, it was from a very, very terrifying origin. His sons were no better. After all, one did not simply get the title of Blood God without any violence. In fact, it was said by some that King Philza was married to death more than just symbolically.

Tommy didn’t know where he stood on religion and gods, but either way, the idea was terrifying. Either way, one thing was sure.

Tommy was never going to see home again.

His knees felt unsteady, and it was a struggle to stay upright, even though he knew the consequences for failing in court. Besides what consequences could touch him now? He was already humiliated beyond belief. He was nothing more than a bargaining chip, passing hands between countries, more of a formality than a promise.

No wonder his brothers were crying. He would be too, if it were one of his brothers (and to all the stars in heaven and Prime Herself, Tommy sent his thanks that his brothers weren't chosen instead). Tommy was too much in shock for it to really process, but he had no doubt that when it really went through that he'd never be home again, that he'd never get to see Ranboo or Tubbo again, except *maybe* if the Antarctic Empire had diplomatic meetings and allowed Tommy to attend. Even then, with such a low chance of that even happening, he'd only be able to see them like this, formal and in court.

"You understand your duties then, Prince Theseus?" Dream said finally, and although Tommy missed the last half of what Dream said, he agreed.

Leaving the room, escorted this time (was it not his home any longer?) felt like a goodbye to everything he had ever known. They led him to his room, because Tommy needed to prepare for his journey, which was to happen in the morning. As an affair keeping two countries from war, it was necessary that it be as smoothly done as possible, as quickly as possible. It wouldn't do to screw it up.

It was Tommy's duty. It sucked and it was terrible, but the system of hostages was proven to work as long as Kings actually cared about the sons that they sent over. Tommy prayed that everything he had ever known about his father was wrong.

At least he was allowed to pack his own attire.

He packed away some of his court wear, although he highly doubted that he would need it much, unless the king wanted to parade him or something. Tommy wasn't a trophy of war, but he was a trophy, of a sort. He was a bargaining chip to the Empire, and nothing more. Tommy packed away his daily clothes, and far more of them. He wasn't sure how he'd be treated in the empire or even where he would be staying, but he knew that it would be smart to have things that brought him comfort.

Tommy looked around his room.

His room was spacious, warm, as a personal room of the royal family rather than one of the halls or outer rooms, but it wouldn't be his much longer.

He was leaving the SMP. Maybe someday he'd come home, but probably ... probably not. In the small corner of the castle that had been Tommy's kingdom, Tommy sobbed. He'd be alone, from now on. No familiar traditions, except perhaps, the feeling of being beneath several people. No familiar faces, except perhaps, people he had seen once or twice at diplomatic meetings, of people who could care less for Tommy except as a token or a way to get political gain.

He packed his clothes, mostly everyday clothes, because how much need would he really have for court appearances? A few of those kinds would probably be enough. Besides, Tommy was rarely called for appearances at home (not home anymore), he probably wouldn't need to in a foreign country.

He tucked Henry, a small plush cow away as well. He had had it since he had arrived in the castle, and the staff needed a way to calm him down. Tommy had not parted with it since. He ... he really liked cows. There were some around the castle, and when he was allowed, he'd go into the fields and spend time with them. Cows were far better and holier than the king, although Tommy could never voice that.

At some point, there was a knock at the door, so Tommy forced himself up. Before he could get even halfway, the door burst open, revealing Tubbo and Ranboo. Thank god.

"Tommy," Tubbo said, crashing into him and landing on the bed, to which Ranboo promptly sprawled on them. Normally, Tubbo wasn't much for physical affection, but Tommy was and well ... this was the last time Tubbo would see his younger brother in quite a while so he was going to make the fucking most of it.

"Tubbo," Tommy said, his voice rough from crying (all of their voices were rough from crying), "Ranboo."

“I’m going to miss you,” Tubbo said, “and then I am going to break out of this castle and sneak into your transport and come with you. And if that fails, I’ll help Ranboo learn transportation and follow along.” Ranboo nodded, as if this was a possibility they had discussed at length and not a theoretical power Ranboo might have, as an End Hybrid.

“Tubbo you can’t leave,” Tommy said, once he got rid of the traitorous feeling that very much wanted his brothers to come after him, “who’s going to take over the throne when dear old dad kicks the bucket.”

“Who’s going to kick his bucket for him,” Tubbo asked. Ranboo started choking.

“That’s literally traitorous, Tubbo,” Ranboo said when he could breathe, “You can’t-you can’t just do that.”

“Well you laughed at literal treason, apparently, your high ground is made of mud, Ranboo.”

Small giggles echoed for only a moment before the room fell silent.

“Tubbo. Ranboo.” Tommy said, finally, “I-we probably aren’t going to see each other. For a while. I-or ever again I-could you keep this safe for me?” Tommy tossed one of his prized possessions on the bed between Ranboo and Tubbo. “To remember me. And since the Antarctic Empire is in the north, it should point in my general direction. Kind of.” The compass was expensive, gifted to Tommy at some point and had become inexplicably important to young Tommy, enough that he had carved his name into the once smooth metal of its covering.

“I’d give you the disks, but I don’t think I’d be allowed to get them out of their display,” Tommy said, “I-I’ll miss you.”

“Tommy,” Ranboo said, “We don’t-heck, you need something from us, to remember, uh-”

“Ranboo,” Tommy said, interrupting his brother’s anxious rambling, “I don’t think I could ever forget either of you.”

All three of them slept in a tangle, Tommy's chosen belongings packed and ready for when he would depart in the morning.

Goodbyes were bitter and in private, because Ranboo and Tubbo really couldn't be seen doing them in public, as their official goodbyes were technically negligible and had been done when Dream announced to the court what the plan was.

Tubbo was still hung up on murdering his father, and then snatching Tommy back, to hell with the consequences.

"You can't do that Tubbo," Tommy said, half seriously, although he knew Tubbo couldn't be (he couldn't be), "Tubbo, people would die."

"Dad sure would," Tubbo agreed disagreeably. This wasn't something they would be able to settle before Tommy left.

"Well boys," Tommy said, "this is the end."

"Maybe they'll let you send letters?"

"Maybe Dream will let us receive letters?"

"Yeah," Tommy said, "I'll um." Tommy wasn't really sure how to say it, but neither of his brothers seemed to be able to either. They cried a little more, hugged a bit, and then people came to collect Tommy and his things. Ranboo and Tubbo's lives and studies and responsibilities would carry on as if nothing happened, because in the grand scheme of things, had anything really changed?

The royal family had one less son wandering in the halls, but no one had died. It was just a strategic move. It was simple strategy.

Nothing was wrong.

Everything was normal.

Just Tommy was going to be ages from home in an unfamiliar place. His transport began without a hitch. Dream didn't see him off. Tommy would probably never see his father again for a very long time.

Dream was probably okay with that.

The ride was painful. Not because of the lack of comfort, the transport carrying Tommy wasn't exactly built for luxury, but it worked well enough. No, Tommy couldn't stand to see his home, his country pass by him. He'd never fucking see it again. They passed through the city, *Tommy's city*. He had little claim to it as the third prince, but every bit as much claim as anyone living between the streets. This was his city, he was part of its lifeblood.

Losing a little bit of blood never really hurt anything anyway, though.

The roads went from paved to stone to dirt and Tommy's head didn't move. He just stared. He stared so much that the people attending to him grew worried, but Tommy waved them off as politely as he could, as distracted as he was. The journey was long, but not painfully so. They only had to reach the border, where he would be picked up by another envoy, this time a group from the Antarctic Empire, and then, he'd end up wherever King Philza decided was the best place for him.

When they reached the border, Tommy only felt drained. He should probably be more concerned with what was going on around him at this point, but really, nothing that Tommy did would change anything. He couldn't change anything.

Acting was useless. Talking was useless. Tommy was useless. He should just ... wait. Wait for the fate that awaited him, what else could he do?

Being his usual asshole self would mess up the proceedings possibly. Tommy could be stupid, but he wasn't so stupid that he would lead to countries to war just because he wanted to take his anger out on someone else. There was no world where Tommy felt right changing this.

It felt like it had been no time and all time since Tommy had gotten in the transport. He hardly remembered the passage of time, he just knew that it was enough apparently, to bring him to the border between the SMP and the Antarctic. He knew that he had felt the air get colder as they moved north away from the capital. He knew that it would only be getting colder.

He knew this was where he would take his leave.

Tommy was called from his transport calmly, by attendants who clearly just wanted the send off to go smoothly. Hopefully, this wasn't a ploy that would get Tommy murdered on the spot. That would suck (would it suck more than being sent away from home for the rest of his life? Tommy wasn't sure. Maybe the empire should just shoot him in the head and put an end to his misery. But no, Tubbo and Ranboo and millions of innocents would suffer for that decision).

So instead, Tommy allowed himself to be drawn listenless outside and towards the bridge that marked the road between the two countries. It was innocuous. It was dreadful.

"... Prince Theseus?" A voice questioned, stepping across the bridge that formed the border between the two countries. It was a small bridge, for such a great divide.

The speaker was tall. Shorter than Tommy, but broader. Tommy might joke about it, but he knew he was still lanky like a noodle. It was normal during the teenage years, yeah, definitely. This man was built like someone who would fit in easily on a battlefield. This was a peaceful meeting though, and he had only a sword with the royal family crest on it, probably more of a keepsake than an actual weapon.

His pink hair whipped furiously in the wind, but he made no move to pull it back.

"I am," Tommy said, grabbing his items and stepping forward. This was the end. The end. He turned his head towards the envoy and booped the horse that had carried him and his party through the journey so well. She was a good girl. "Who do I have the pleasure of speaking with?"

"Technoblade," the man said, almost sounding amused, and Tommy's heart nearly stopped. Fuck. he really should have remembered better than that. Technoblade was one of *Philza's*

fucking sons. Tommy hadn't had time to study the Antarctic Empire specifically before he left, but his lessons had covered their neighbors. Tommy was pretty sure that they had met before, when Tommy was much younger at a meeting, but his memories of that far back were hazy, and he couldn't really be sure.

"I-apologies, you highness," Tommy said quickly, dropping to his knees, because *that was what you did in the presence of royalty higher than yourself*, hoping it might save him from the prince's wrath. He cleaned up his bow, trying to make sure that it was properly respectful. He couldn't entirely remember the bowing customs of the Antarctic Empire, even though he had studied all of the customs of nearby countries. In his panic, he couldn't remember anything.

Prince Technoblade gave him an odd look, before returning the gesture. Was that ... was that customary? Tommy searched his head. He was pretty sure that equals could avoid the pretense of bowing, or bow to each other, depending on the situation. Why was Prince Technoblade bowing though? He and Tommy weren't fucking equals. Even Tubbo and Ranboo weren't his equals (they did not care if Tommy did not bow to them. They did not want Tommy to bow to them).

A moment passed. Technoblade stood, and Tommy, hoping he was doing this right, copied him.

Technoblade's eyes, previously glistening with what was probably amusement, seemed to be concerned now, for who Tommy didn't know.

"Thank you for your acquaintance," Tommy said, in his own customs, because once again, he couldn't fucking remember the proper response in the Antarctic Empire. He'd have to figure everything out, before he was brought into the country. Technoblade nodded his head.

"The pleasure is mine," Technoblade said, "The empire welcomes you." And with that, Tommy's attendants stepped away. No one was to come with him, according to Dream's command Tommy wasn't worth it. Why bother to spare the people?

"Technoblade," someone shouted, once they crossed the bridge and were out of earshot of Tommy's envoy. "You weren't supposed to just go on ahead. There's fucking procedures."

“I got the kid,” Techno said, voice changing from the formal tone he had just used with Tommy. “Cool down, he’s literally fine.”

“If you don’t do it right, it could be qualified as kidnapping, Techno.” The two continued talking, but Tommy ignored them in favor of watching the water below the bridge run. Tommy wished that he could do that.

Run.

As far away from Tehcno and whoever this Sam guy was and back to Tubbo and Ranboo and everyone else that he actually knew.

“They took it well.”

“No, you just took a child.” How were they so casual? Wasn't Techno a prince? Then again, Tommy could be informal outside of the public eye. They were out in the middle of nowhere, and Tommy probably just didn’t count as a person, yeah. Yeah, probably that.

“Prince Theseus? No, he’s-” Techno stopped, “You’re the prince of the SMP that just turned nineteen, right?” Tommy cleared his throat.

“No,” he said, quietly.

“Hrm?”

“No,” Tommy said, a little bit louder so that Prince Technoblade would be able to hear him, “No, um, Tubbo just turned nineteen. I um. I’m the youngest, I’m seventeen.”

“Oh.” Prince Technoblade was silent for a moment. “Did you get all of your stuff together?”

“Yeah. Yes, Prince Technoblade.”

“Then let’s ... then let’s go get you situated. It’s a bit of a travel to the capital.” Tommy was silent while he was led to a transport that could carry his things. Techno explained that he would be in the same one as Tommy, probably to watch him if he had a guess. Tommy agreed, because he was going to be as agreeable as possible on this trip even if it killed him.

He was probably going to end up dead anyway (he might implode if he kept trying to maintain his act, but he would die if he didn’t)

Good of the country, good of the country, this was for the good of his country, and TOMmy could do it. He would.

Tommy chucked his things into the transport. It was going to be a long few days.

It was silent at first. It was so fucking silent all of the time. Tommy would have loaded his things, but some people took his things to load and Tommy was left with Prince Technoblade.

Tommy was going to be walking on eggshells from now on.

Over the course of time, Tommy learned that Techno didn’t really talk all that much, when they weren’t surrounded by people that he evidently knew. The prince was polite enough, even though he really didn’t have to be (Tommy was on his turf now), but he didn’t talk.

Tommy, on the other hand, was dying for human interaction. He’d hardly talked as his journey out of the SMP, because well, being tossed out of your home as a bargaining chip tended to do that to people, but now that he was gone, he wanted to at least form a few connections so that he wouldn’t feel like an anchorless boat for all of eternity. He at very least wanted someone who he could talk with casually while he was on this journey.

“Prince Technoblade,” Tommy said, before waiting for acknowledgement. He took the small hmm? He got as acknowledgement, and hoped that it was enough. “I don’t mean to be presumptuous, but do you know of the ... arrangements for me? While I am under the

Empire's care?" Tommy hoped the wording was good enough, and that the question itself wasn't bad enough to simply be called rude or out of line.

"Were you not told?" Tommy flushed. Great. Starting off the conversation with a nice dosage of humiliation. His favorite. Technoblade gave him a look. "I guess ... obviously not. We do have a document detailing it that we sent to your king. You will have a quarters in the castle, and you'll be able to continue whatever your studies at home were, or slightly adjusted, depending on what tutors we have available."

"Thank you," Tommy said, "Would I-uh, nevermind." It was probably too soon to even ask about home. It had hardly been any time since they left in the first place, certainly Technoblade wouldn't appreciate it.

Honestly, Tommy didn't remember how old the other man was, and while he'd love to pester him (he looked very pesterable) he also didn't want him to decide that Tommy's country was worth going to war against after all.

So, other questions, even ones he really wanted to ask were going to have to wait until Tommy could get a hold of the document that told him what was going on or until he was around someone who it was appropriate to ask.

Tommy played the waiting game.

Tommy hated the waiting game.

It was something he had been taught since he had been a child. Patience was a virtue, and Prime, everyone expected it of him.

Growing up, Tommy had been a bit less of a priority. It sounded stupid to say, in the face of the fact that he was a literal prince, but inevitably, he ended up below his brothers. It made sense, you had the heir, the spare, and then ... then there was Tommy.

Tommy didn't want the throne. It was probably important to note that Tommy really, he could care less about the whole thing.

No. Tommy wanted some fucking attention. If being good couldn't bring it, then perhaps being loud, being disruptive would work. Nothing could bring his father's eyes to him except when Dream decided, probably arbitrarily, that he wanted to see Tommy. But still, someone would look and that was better than nobody.

Tubbo and Ranboo, of course, were always there. Tommy adored them, not that he said as much often. God he wanted to be with them right now.

But war.

Country.

Heir

Spare

And Tommy.

But Tommy knew how to be patient. He could. He could do that. And be fine. Tommy was going to have to control himself from now on better anyways. Foreign court with foreign rules, thankfully a similar language, differing a bit in accent and slang, but more or less the same.

Huh. well. Small comforts.

The journey passed. Technoblade hardly spoke aside from small comments, and Tommy followed suit. He didn't know what would be expected of him, so he did his best to copy and hope he was right.

Tommy could tell when they arrived in the capital. The road had been dirt for miles, and then boom. Stones. The clatter of hooves on stones woke Tommy up, and in the sunset, Tommy saw the glistening capital of the Antarctic Empire. It was beautiful, and Tommy should have expected nothing less. Everything was snowy, and the crystals glittered in the falling sunlight like a thousand gems strewn through the city. A wall bordered the capital.

Tommy looked out until his face got cold. When they had entered the Antarctic, and it had begun getting colder, Tommy had been determined to get through it. The SMP covered a lot of ranges of temperature, but stupid cold was not one of them, unfortunately, and Tommy didn't bring a coat nearly warm enough for himself. Technoblade, however, had apparently noticed, because Tommy had woken up to the Prince's own coat draped on him multiple times, as he was already wearing a coat offered by the prince himself. It was dyed with the Antarctic's blue rather than any familiar home colors, but Tommy accepted it all the same. It was warm.

"Your face is going to freeze out there," Prince Technoblade said, "You might want to stop peeking out. You'll be able to see the city plenty once we get through the gates." The thing was, Tommy wasn't sure if that was true. Technoblade could certainly mean well, but honestly? Who was to keep King Philza from just keeping Tommy behind the walls of the castle itself. Or in a room or a wing and never letting him out. It would be his right, Tommy knew, and not necessarily unheard of and even frowned upon in this arrangement. He was allowed. He could.

Tommy couldn't stop him.

Regardless, Tommy listened and tucked his head back into the carriage that he and Techno were in. His face was starting to feel kind of like it was melting now that he was back in the warmth.

"You're cold," Technoblade said, in a tone that Tommy now understood was probably a teasing reprimand, as he'd gotten to know the other prince better over the journey. Technoblade scooped close enough to Tommy that he could feel the heat from the other's body. In a smooth movement, Technoblade draped his cape around Tommy. "You need to keep warm, you idiot." Tommy agreed. Anything less would be rude, and really, Tommy did want to stay warm.

“So,” Technoblade said, “Do you know of my family? Just so you know before you have to meet all of those people.”

“I think so,” Tommy said, not wanting to appear overconfident in case he forgot someone or something dumb.

“Right,” Techno said, “Well there’s Phil. he’s-god, he’s the guy with the big fucking wings? If you aren’t careful, you might run into the crows that surround him. God, those things are idiots. Anyway, Phil is the king, yeah, you’ll probably meet him. And Wilbur.” Techno’s face wrinkled like he was trying to be disgusted, but he just ended up looking fond.

“Wilbur’s Wilbur. My older brother. Looks kind of like he’s got a dirty mop on his head, but that’s just his hair.”

What.

Well that was certainly. An introduction. Tommy probably wouldn’t introduce someone as unfamiliar as a literal hostage to his family like that, but Technoblade might think it was funny. After all, it wasn’t like Tommy was much of a threat at all, he was just Tommy.

“Thanks, Prince Technoblade,” Tommy said, even though the information that Technoblade gave him was fucking useless unless he wanted to make fun of the royal family, which he probably shouldn’t.

-

Technoblade watched Tommy carefully, as the kid tried to freeze his face off before he even got into the city proper.

Techno would be lying if he said he wasn’t slightly nervous to meet the prince of the SMP. Meeting new people could certainly be ... nerve wracking, but the particular circumstances made it worse.

Number one: none of Techno's family was here. He would admit to himself, in specific situations, he may ... use his family members to buffer him from strangers.

Number two: Technoblade was tired from the journey. Two weeks was long enough.

Number three: If he messed this up, it would possibly lead to war.

Great.

He'd (possibly?) have to interact with the king of the SMP, and that wouldn't really be a big deal if he were in court behind nice protocols, but his country was kind of stealing his child away, so he'd probably be pretty pissed off.

Although, he did agree to the deal

(how much choice did a parent really have when it was between his child and an entire country full of other people's children?)

Once they got to the border, Techno gathered his nerves and approached the border. The border between the SMP and home wasn't very guarded. Yet.

Dream didn't show his face. Techno didn't know whether to be relieved or horrified that he just sent his son off alone.

He had dressed a bit warmly for the weather, but most of his clothes were made for warmth, after all, his home was freezing cold.

(his first home was warm and burning, not much of a home, but it was all he had back then. Before Phil found him, and saved him.)

But now that he was finally home, the clothes were paying off

“So uh,” Technoblade said when they arrived at the castle, “usually, we would do introductions and court appearances and stuff right now, but we’re both tired probably, because i know I am, and I probably haven’t had half the days that you have had recently, so I’m just going to show you your room for now and someone will collect you in a few hours once you have had the chance to actually rest and clean up a bit.”

“Of course, Prince Technoblade,” Theseus said, because that was all Theseus said when Techno was asking him questions.

“Cool, just ... follow me I guess.” Tommy followed Techno through the halls of the castle which actually kind of reminded him of home. The architecture was different of course and they actually had heating here, but there were still tapestries detailing family and country victories. Important events and gods and changing of rule and wars. Those gave way to a more personal dwelling, much like the personal wing of Tommy’s castle had. Well, not Tommy’s castle-not his home anymore.

“This is where you’ll be staying,” Technoblade said, stopping in front of a door and swinging it open, “If you need anything, feel free to let me or anyone else know and we’ll be able to make you more comfortable. Someone will come to collect you in a few hours. Welcome home, Theseus.”

-

And then, for the first time in a long time, Tommy was alone.

He did his best to wipe off the tears and make it look like he was never crying in the first place. He bathed. He wandered the room. It was ... it was a lovely room. There was a small bathroom attached, well “small” in comparison to the rest of the room. It was certainly up to princely standards, and more than Tommy could probably expect fairly.

The room itself was impersonal, as Tommy had expected it to be, but the flag of the SMP was draped across the bed post. Obviously that hadn’t been part of the original room. Somehow had added that, as a courtesy to Tommy.

God that was so nice of them. Tommy would hug them, except he wasn't going to hug anyone here.

This was going to be home, for the next indefinite amount of time.

Oh.

It also seemed like there was a balcony, which was so cool. Tommy was totally going to clamber out there if he got clothes that were appropriate for the elements in the Antarctic empire. Even if it would piss off the Antarctic empire it would be totally worth it. Not really, but still. Still.

He changed his clothes into something less gross (It was hardly formal, a red and white shirt and comfortable pants. He'd have to change before anyone came to collect him, but come on, he was homesick already, the last thing he wanted was to be uncomfortable.)

The bed was comfortable, but different from the one he had at home. It made sense. It was a different country with different supplies and also, beds were just different.

Tommy hated it.

Tommy hated this whole thing, but if he acted like he did, something bad could happen.

Exhausted from his journey, Tommy passed out, hoping the whole thing could just be a nightmare.

you can put your dukes down, stringbean

Chapter Summary

feat. Wilbur being very bad at being a decent host and an authors attempt at shoving fluff and angst side by side.

Chapter Notes

Sorry about how long this took to update. Finals suck and I'm so glad they're over :)
They also ate all of my fucking creativity. Rude.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy woke up to a knock at his door. Huh? For a second, he was back there, just after he got the news, and Tubbo and Ranboo were coming to visit him.

Then, reality came crashing back on him and he remembered that he wasn't at home. Tommy was in the middle of the Antarctic Empire's castle, and he was entirely in their hands. His father had given him up.

His dad tossed him out like it was nothing. His dad didn't even seem conflicted about sending Tommy away. Tommy deserved to have somebody feel bad about it, didn't he?

Didn't he?

Tommy rolled out of bed. Surprisingly, it wasn't freezing when he kicked his blankets off, instead, he was met with well heated air.

Tommy swung the door open, fully expecting a servant or orderly of some kind to be picking him up or something.

He ran into some tall lanky man who could definitely be a servant. He was just taller than Tommy, which he might be a little bit bitter about.

“... Hello?” Tommy looked just below the man’s eyes, because he didn’t really want to crane his neck anyways. Definitely not because he was intimidated or anything. He shivered a bit, the air coming from the hall significantly colder than the room he was in. “Sorry, what can I do for you?”

“Hi, I’ve come to collect you,” the tall person said, “I um. Wasn’t sure that you had warm enough clothes, since you came from the SMP, so I brought you a few things.”

“Thank you,” Tommy said, almost instinctively (you had to *thank* people for gifts. Anything less was rude, anything less than that could get you hurt. Or other people hurt). He was on thin ice here, and Tommy just had to keep quiet and polite in order to keep the countries from falling to war. He wasn’t sure how. “I-do you know where I’m going? Should I ... change?” The tall guy shrugged.

“You don’t have to,” he said, “we’re just meeting the king.” He said it so flippantly, and he was probably making fun of Tommy because of course. Crap. Yeah, Tommy was going to have to change. He couldn’t meet a king dressed like this.

“Okay, um, just give me a second uh,” Tommy picked Henry up and tucked him safely to the side. Henry was one of the last things he had that really reminded him of home, and he was going to keep him safe from now on. He honestly wasn’t sure if they had many cows in the Antarctic empire. Was it too cold for them? That would be sad.

It was kind of irrelevant, he was supposed to be getting ready right now.

The man handed him some clothes, *warm* clothes and stepped back towards the door.

“Right then,” he said, “I’ll just be waiting until you’re ready.” Tommy wrestled out of his comfortable clothes and into some of his “worthy to meet a king in” clothing. He didn’t want to wear anything that was too overtly SMP, because while he was still completely loyal to his country and technically, there was nothing wrong with wearing it, he wasn’t sure what King

Philza's opinions were yet. He didn't want to anger the king. It was thin ice, and he wasn't sure what would melt it.

He settled on the pants that the man had brought him, because they were pretty comfortable, warm, and most importantly, nondescript. They weren't overtly from the empire, and Tommy could live with that.

He put on one of his nicer shirts, which was mostly normal, but the eyes of XD were draped around his shoulders smoothly on the shirt, and the color was the colors of the SMP. Green and black and white.

Finally, Tommy wrestled his crown on. Normally, he didn't really like it, but it felt kind of comforting in a familiar way. The metal was warm from where it had been tucked between his packed clothes and the design itself was gorgeous. Tommy didn't really love it, but for the way it reminded him of home, he adored it.

Finally, Tommy draped the cape that had been left for him across his shoulders. It was warm, kind of like draping a blanket over his shoulders, and best of all, it covered him up, and made him feel safer. Although half of him just wanted to curl up in the cape and disappear, Tommy laced up his boots and stepped out of his new room.

Dream had often cautioned Tommy against looking small or weak around foreign people. They would take advantage of him or use it against the SMP. Here though, looking like less of a threat was to Tommy's advantage. At least, it was a good enough excuse for him.

"You look good," the man said, "warm. That's good. Are you ready, Prince Theseus?" Tommy nodded.

"Sure ... man," Tommy said, awkwardly realizing he didn't know the other's name, "Let's go then?" They set off at an easy pace.

"Haven't seen much of it yet," Tommy said, "But it was really pretty when we were coming in." Tommy meant it genuinely. He loved the SMP, with everything in him, and really, he doubted there could be any country that was prettier than the SMP's delicate architecture and

rolling fields filled with cows, and Tubbo and Ranboo and everything about it that made it home.

The Antarctic was pretty though, in the same way a gilded cage was perhaps, but still pretty.

“Pretty?” Yeah, that was fair. That was a bit of a weird way to describe a country that you had just gotten to. It kind of felt like telling someone that their children were beautiful. Like who the fucks first impression of people were to tell them they had beautiful children? Sounded kind of like wrongun behavior if you asked Tommy.

“We don’t have that much snow, at least not this often in the SMP,” Tommy explained, “Anyway, when I was coming in with Prince Technoblade, all the snow was all glisteny and shit. Really pretty.”

“Ah yeah,” he said, “what do you think of Techno anyway?” Tommy was struck for a moment by how casual the man was about the literal second prince, but then he remembered Prince Technoblade’s interactions with the people they had traveled with when they first met. If this guy was picking him up, then he was probably pretty well known to the royal family, and apparently, they were pretty informal in their inner circle.

“Quiet,” Tommy said, “A bit of a confusing dude.” Tommy wasn’t going to go around slandering Techno to one of the people loyal to the royal family in case it got him in trouble. What would be his punishment anyway? Isolation? Starvation? Would they lay a hand on Tommy? Would they just go to war the instant he pissed him off?

He didn’t know. The unknowns terrified him.

“Not very helpful though,” Tommy said, kind of as an afterthought, “Gave me just the worst answers” The man beside him made a curious noise. “Yeah,” Tommy said, bolstered by the man’s agreement, “I tried asking about the royal family, because, well, you know. But he just gave me ... unhelpful descriptions.”

“Unhelpful descriptions?”

“Yeah. Said the king had crows and wings and the most information I got against Prince Wilbur was that he looks like he’s got a dirty mop on his head.” the man beside him started choking. “Not that those are my opinions.” Tommy paused for a moment. “Or that it’s wrong for the prince to say that I-”

“Oh my god.” The man choked more. “And he has no right to say that when his hair looks like that. Seriously, a mop? Does this look like a mop to you?” He gestured at his hair.

Fuck.

Not again.

Tommy blue screened.

Wilbur took the silence as something much different.

“You think my hair looks like a fucking mop?” He sounded heartbroken. Tommy couldn't even hear the joke in his void, because he didn't know Wilbur well enough. Heck, he didn't even know Wilbur was Wilbur.

This was why Ranboo always told him to ask people's names before going too far into conversation. Shit like this happened.

“I'm so sorry, Prince Wilbur,” Tommy said eventually, “I didn't ... realize. That you were you. My apologies.” Tommy made sure to switch from his casual persona to his prince at work persona. Fuck. Maybe he could still salvage this?

Who was he kidding? Nope. The harm was probably already done. Maybe Wilbur would forgive him if he didn't realize.

“Also, I don’t think your hair looks like a mop,” Tommy added, despite knowing that wasn’t really going to fix anything. And he actually did kind of see the comparison now.

“It does look like a mop, you don’t have to lie to be nice,” a new voice said. Fuck. Prince Technoblade.

Tommy had liked Techno during the journey, but he wasn’t sure if the castle would bring a new dynamic. Now that he was here, it was so fucking real.

“How dare you,” Wilbur said, running his fingers through his hair, “How dare you say my hair looks like a mop.”

“Technically, I said a dirty mop.” Wilbur wacked Technoblade lightly on the shoulder. Tommy skirted to the side, not wanting to get between the two siblings.

“Look, you’re scaring poor Prince Theseus,” Wilbur said.

“Am not,” Techno insisted, “Theseus has been with me for like, a week and a half already. He knows me better than that.” Tommy held himself carefully, trying to cover his fear. If it was that obvious to Wilbur, that was a bad thing.

“He would if you actually talked,” Wilbur said, “Oh look at me, I’m prince Technoblade. I hear voices, but somehow that’s made me even less soci-ahh”

“The voices make me less sociable,” Technoblade insisted, “I get all my socializin’ needs internally, shut the fuck up Wilbur.”

Tommy wasn’t even sure what was happening in front of him at the moment. He just shuffled awkwardly, very aware how separate he was from the brothers and their conversation.

“You have to be friendly to Theseus,” Wilbur insisted, “he’s a child. And he’s new.”

“I was nice, he’s alive, isn’t he?” Well, that had terrifying connotations. But Tommy wasn’t terrified. He knew how to hide his panic well enough that nobody else would notice.

(He didn’t)

Wilbur just sighed.

“Whatever, we have to get ready to meet dad, though, so” Wilbur paused and slipped a crown out of somewhere and draped it over his head without any fanfare. Fuck’s sake. Why were they all so stupidly casual.

“See you in the throne room,” Wilbur said, “Please don’t be too anxious, dad really is soft. Honestly. You aren’t going to get hurt, okay? We’re safe.” Tommy wasn’t sure where all of that was coming from, but it felt wrong.

Everything felt wrong.

“It’s going to be okay, Theseus,” Wilbur said, “We’re going to be there. Just. Gotta keep up appearances, I’m sure you know how it is.”

Tommy agreed. He did.

“Someone will be with you,” Techno said, before leaving, “His name is Sam, okay? You might have met him during the trip. He’ll help you, okay.”

Then Tommy was left alone in the hallway. It was mostly quiet in the hallway, and the only people who passed him seemed to be very busy and paid Tommy no mind. That was fine with him. He kind of wanted to be left alone.

“Prince Theseus?” A man said, “My name’s Sam. Are you ready? We’re going to meet King Philza, okay? I’m not sure what’s been explained to you already.”

“Not much yet,” Tommy said.

“Alright. It’s just our regular affair. We’re just going to have a simple meeting, in the public eye so that introductions are done and everyone knows you’re safe and you made it to us, okay? People are watching. If anything goes wrong, people will know.” Well that was terrifying. “It’s the best way to keep people safe.”

Silence, for a moment.

“Do you have any questions?” Tommy did. He had so many.

“What are the ... rules? In the throne room? I don't know if they're different from ...” Tommy trailed off.

“Right. We just have to get into the throne room. We’ll know when to enter the room when we are introduced. You just have to walk down the middle of the aisle. There’s some stuff that the king will say, just general introduction stuff, officially welcoming you to the castle. All of the official papers and things have already been signed. This is basically just for the peace of mind for your father and to introduce the situation to the court. It’ll be recorded as an event, and then you can go back to whatever else you were doing before.”

“Thank you,” Tommy said, even though it did little to ease his anxieties. Tommy wasn’t aware of all their customs and messing one of them up was terrifying.

“I’ll be with you,” Sam said, “I can guide you. It’s going to be okay.” Tommy breathed, a bit shakily, but it was going to be okay. It would be alright. Tommy was fine. They weren’t going to kill him, it would be a direct admission of war. Surely they didn’t want war.

Surely, they didn't want a war. Surely, Tommy wasn't brought here as a elaborate declaration of-

"Prince Theseus," Sams' voice said softly, "Please breathe. Here-" there was some shuffling. Tommy wasn't really aware of his environment at the moment. Everything felt nebulous. "Can you look me in the eyes-shit." There was a voice in the background. Someone said Tommy's name. Someone who wasn't Sam. "Ignore that. Shh. We're alright. Can you name something you can see?"

"I can't-uh, sorry. Sorry. Sorry. I'm sorry. I'm fine." Tommy wiped at his face, and stood up straight. He ran his fingers through his hair, and straightened his clothes. He was going to look fine. He was going to be fine.

"I'm sorry," Tommy said again, "I'm okay." Sam looked incredibly doubtful, but he accepted it.

"Okay," same said, "let's go then." Tommy hoped that it didn't look like he had been crying, because that would be so fucking embarrassing for someone to see he'd been crying. Crying while meeting the king for the first time? Terrifying. Stupid

For a moment, when he stepped into the throne room, he was back. Light flooding from the ceiling, a blue carpet, a crowd.

There were people and it was the same.

He was back. He was home, but it wasn't going to be home for much longer, and the world was ending.

Three thrones.

Three thrones, two for his brothers and one for his dad, Dream, who was going to send him away, who was going to use him to make the war not happen. Going to get rid of him.

Maybe it was convenience. Maybe Dream always wanted him out of the castle and wanted him to be in someone else's hands.

Maybe Dream really just wanted him gone. Maybe his Father didn't want him around anymore.

Maybe he never did.

"Prince Theseus," King Philza started, before Tommy promptly lost him. He kept himself up straight and tried to maintain the illusion of listening, but he wasn't listening. He wouldn't listen. Thank Prime that Dream had had his tutors train him in this type of behavior. Tommy couldn't bring himself to listen.

He didn't let his eyes wander. Not to the side of Philza's throne, where Wilbur and Technoblade sat on the right and left side respectively.

They stayed glued to the bottom of the throne. Looking to the side would mean seeing the people scattered throughout. Foreign nobles, but nobles all the same.

Time passed.

And passed. Tommy's eyes were fighting to glaze over. It was scary.

He was scared.

He didn't know Philza. Was the king still talking to him? What was going on?

"Almost over," Sam whispered, "Then you can rest, okay? Just a little while longer." Tommy smiled. That was ... nice. Sam could probably get in trouble for whispering while the king was talking, but he did it anyway.

Finally, they wrapped up, and Sam led Tommy away.

“King Philza will still probably want to talk to you.” Tommy paled a little bit more, which Sam didn’t even know was possible. “Not like that. Just. Schooling stuff. Comfort. Probably check on you during the week to make sure you are all right while adjusting. All of the court stuff is over now.”

Sam led him back down the hallway, and Tommy felt like he almost just. Wasn’t there. It was weird. It was awkward.

He just wanted to sleep until he could go back home. The Antarctic empire was pretty from what Tommy had seen of it, but it wasn’t home. It would never be home.

“Go ahead and rest,” Sam told him, “someone will collect you for dinner.” Relieved to be back in his room, Tommy sat on the bed and promptly fell asleep, still entirely dressed in his court clothes.

Hours later, someone was pounding on the door. They had started quietly, to no avail. They had called Tommy’s name. They tried knocking louder.

No answer.

Great.

Technoblade tried shouting Tommy’s name one last time. No answer. No rustle of blankets or anything else in the room.

Invading Tommy’s privacy in the name of making sure the kid was actually alive. Yay.

“Theseus,” Technoblade said again, stepping into the room, and yeah, there Theseus was, passed out on his bed, crown sliding down his forehead.

“Hmm?” Theseus responded in a sleepy voice, “Tubbo?”

“Not Tubbo,” TEchnoblade said, “Techno.”

“Tubbo?”

“Techno.”

“Techno?” Theseus’ eyes flickered open. “Oh. I was. Sorry. I fell asleep. Sorry you had to wake me, Prince Technoblade.” Technoblade shrugged.

“No need to be,” Prince Technoblade said, “ ‘s fine. I’d probably do the same thing if I were in this situation. Court tires me out and I live here. Also, just Techno is fine. The full title is a bit unwieldy, don’t you think?”

“Okay,” Tommy said, “Um, Tommy is okay, too. You don’t-I prefer Tommy over Theseus.”

“Alright then, Tommy,” Technoblade said, “You ready for dinner?”

“Yeah.” Tommy stood up and straightened his crown. He probably shouldn’t be wearing the same wrinkled clothing that he left the throne room in.

Oops.

Dinner was an awkward affair. Technoblade had led him into a beautiful dining room that actually looked similar to the one at home, which made his homesickness ache even more, because it *wasn’t*.

It was clear that this was a more personal room, as it was in the personal wing of the castle rather than in a large hall like they would use during festivals and such. This room was smaller, though no less luxurious.

“I brought Tommy,” Technoblade said, unnecessarily to Wilbur, the only other person in the room. There were four places set.

“Hi Tommy,” Wilbur said pleasantly, “And apparently, Dad’s caught up in work so ...” Relief flooded into Tommy. At least he didn’t have to face the king again today. “Sorry Theseus.”

Why was Wilbur apologizing to him? He didn’t need to do that. Especially not to a hostage. Tommy was just insurance, wasn’t he? Although Dream, if anything, probably wouldn’t see Tommy as much of a deterrent against doing something if he really wanted to.

These people might end up being responsible for Tommy’s death *justifiably* .

“It’s alright, Prince Wilbur,” Tommy said, none of the genuineness in Wil’s tone reaching his. Tommy’s job was to be agreeable and to make sure war didn’t happen.

“Just Wilbur is fine.”

“Of course, Wilbur.” It came out of Tommy’s mouth all wrong, because everything about this situation was wrong. It was awkward. Forks clanked. Tommy ate the food, which was good, but unfamiliar. It didn’t taste like home. It wasn’t home.

He was going to start crying again if he didn’t focus on something else. The only person in the room he felt remotely safety with was Technoblade, because he’d spent quite a long time with him, but even then, he didn’t really know the other at all.

“Is your room alright?” Wilbur asked, speaking up for the first time, “We weren’t really sure what your preferences were, so we just sort of ... made it a blank slate. Do you need anything different?”

Tommy shook his head, before realizing that it was a very impolite way to respond to the literal heir to the Antarctic empire.

He was going to get such a bad grade in dinner with royals, something both normal to fear and possible to get.

-

Everything was going badly, and had been since Tommy arrived. It was not the other's fault, Wilbur knew, because all Tommy had done so far was sleep and walk around a little bit (and also possibly have a panic attack, although Wilbur couldn't really be sure. That was what it looked like from his position on his throne though).

To be fair, it was already a mess before Tommy arrived. The Dream SMP and the Empire had been in a tumultuous relationship for a long time. Communication was bad, and tensions were high.

The solution that they came to was ... less than great. Philza did not like literally just ... ripping children away from their parents. It was cruel, and he would do most anything to avoid it. But between going to war and taking a child, well, they were taking the child.

(However, between sending Techno or Wilbur away and war, Wilbur was pretty confident what the answer was. Phil did his best to balance kingship and fatherhood, but sometimes he failed, and it was rarely as a father)

Now they had Prince Theseus, third son of Dream of the SMP. He was sixteen.

Wilbur had met Prince Theseus before, long ago, when Wilbur had been much younger.

Wilbur had only been eight, and Tommy had just been a toddling baby, really. His memories of the whole event were shaky, but he remembered Tommy being adorable, blond and giggly and very smiley.

Also, for some very odd reason, alone. Eight year old Wilbur had found him and carried him around for most of the event. While Wilbur had trails of guards looking out for him, there was no one watching Tommy.

At least, not until a four year old came up to Wilbur demanding he give his younger brother back or he'd kill him and then get his father to declare war on his country. It wasn't a hollow threat by the child's standards, though unlikely.

Wilbur had only known Tommy's name from the information he had-there weren't many blond royal babies attending these types of meetings.

The kid declared himself to be Tubbo, and he himself couldn't be much older than four or five. His thread wasn't very intimidating. Even his shadow, a small enderman hybrid Wilbur was pretty sure was Ranboo, Dream's second heir, didn't scare Wilbur.

"I didn't steal him," he insisted, "I just found him. No one was watching him." Tubbo narrowed his eyes, looking pretty pissed off for a four year old.

"Again? I couldn't find him either and none of my minders would either." And in fact, looking around, he could see a few unconcerned minders watching their interaction, no one rushing in to stop Wilbur from just ... making off with Dream's youngest son. The heck?

Why didn't Tommy have his own minders?

"Well, you certainly can't watch him. I'll just keep an eye on him." Tommy cooed in his arms.

"Tub." Tubbo's eyes lit up.

“Tommy. Hi, baby,” Tubbo giggled when Tommy did.

Tommy shrieked.

“Wil’b,” he said, thrashing his arms everywhere.

“ ‘bo. Play with toms.”

“All of us?” Prince Tubbo said doubtfully, to which Tommy just responded by screeching play again.

It was a good meeting, even if Wilbur didn’t remember most of it. Nobody had been assassinated, at very least.

Tommy, obviously, was very different from his younger self. It had been a long time, but he still had the fluffy blond hair, though it had darkened slightly and glittering blue eyes. He was fuckiing sad now though.

Which, honestly, Wilbur would be as well if he had been taken away from home to a foreign land because his father couldn’t keep his mouth shut while he was doing negotiations and led his country into so many wars that they couldn’t possibly handle more and just. Send Wilbur over to their possible enemies.

Not that they were going to do anything to Tommy (what would happen if Dream were to do something though? Some form of reparation would have to follow.)

Wilbur just wanted to get to know Tommy without terrifying the heck out of him. Unlike Technoblade, he didn’t get (and waste, in Wilbur’s opinion) the chance to meet Tommy immediately, instead the first impression of Wilbur was so impossible scuffed by so many things, like Wilbur forgetting to introduce himself in the first place.

No, he just had to get on Tommy's good side.

The other schooling and education hadn't started yet, and Wilbur could get out of his, sometimes, and he was pretty sure that "introducing Tommy to his new environment and being a welcoming ~~brother~~ host would be a good move.

After all, Tommy might be stuck with them for a long while, it would be cruel to stay at a distance from him. He was living in their personal wing, eating meals with them, possibly sharing tutors and space, and Wilbur was going to make the most of it and try to snag a new baby brother.

He already had one, but Techno called him a dirty mop head, so he didn't want that one anymore

(He was kidding, Wilbur would always love Technoblade. He was his younger brother, even with the voices and the dirty mop head calling)

Tommy was free real estate.

But step one: getting to know the kid and making him feel comfortable. Because no one deserved to feel awful all of the time. Homesickness wasn't fun.

He wasn't sure where Tommy was. Technically, Tommy had free reign to the whole castle, which he should know, but he might not. Tommy was shy, kind of.

Well, he hadn't been when Wilbur first met him, but then he found out that Wilbur was Wilbur and now he was shy.

Wilbur wanted to talk to the kid that freely admitted that one of the royal heirs could possibly look like they just had a dirty mop on their head instead of hair. It was funny. He wanted to

meet that kid. He just had to peel back all of the layers until Tommy felt comfortable enough being around him.

But first, making sure that Tommy was comfortable enough to make the castle into his second home.

“Hey Tommy,” Wilbur said when he finally found the kid, tucked away on top of a fucking library shelf like some sort of gremlin (serious, how did he even get up there?). Wilbur wasn’t sure why Tommy spent so much time in the library. He might just like books, or maybe he liked the librarian.

Maybe he didn’t know where else to go? The library was also warm, and he was pretty sure that Tommy didn’t have many warm clothes, which was something he intended to do something about pretty soon.

(They could get him warm clothes, but Wilbur wanted him to have some that he actually liked, not just ones that were picked out for him and forced on him)

“Prince Wilbur?” Tommy questioned, blushing, apparently embarrassed about being on top of the shelf. “I’m sorry, let me get down. Please.” In one horrifying motion, Tommy just kind of ... scooped off of the shelf and landed in a way that looked like it could have broken his ankles.

“Are you alright?” Wilbur asked when Tommy trembled and looked kind of like he was about to faceplant.

“That wasn’t the uh, brightest move I could have pulled. Sorry.” Tommy apologized almost impulsively. “I um. What did you want me for?” Right, right.

“I wanted to give you a tour of the castle, if you’re up for it. To welcome you. After all, if you are going to be staying here, you should know everywhere you can go, right?” Tommy looked kind of excited at the prospect, which was the best emotion, the happiest emotion that Wilbur had seen from him yet. Best of all, it didn’t look disgustingly fake.

Now, the best places indoors could wait, because Wilbur wanted to show him the garden before it got too cold too.

Because from all of the studying Wilbur did of the SMP, they didn't get much snow. And what better way to get people to relax than play in the snow with them?

Chapter End Notes

Sorry if it's scuffed

If you enjoyed, feel free to leave a comment. I get nervous replying, so sorry if I'm awkward as heck in them or take forever to respond, but I do love all of them.

:]

I think it's unfair, your situation

Chapter Summary

do u ever try to speedrun adoption and then it just goes stupidly wrong?

Chapter Notes

Sorry this took so long to come out! There's no real reason except I couldn't bring myself to work on anything after I finished school. Anyways, happy new year!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The thing about the Antarctic Empire was that it was absolutely freezing outside pretty much the whole time Tommy had been there. Granted, he hadn't been there very long, but still.

The other thing about the Antarctic Empire was they had snow, and snow was freaking amazing. Seriously. Tommy had been fairly excited when Wilbur said he wanted to give him a tour of the castle, because it would be the most interesting he had done in the past few days.

Honestly, if Tommy were asked to describe how his first few days in a foreign country would be, he would have expected "lonely", and it definitely was, but he didn't expect "boring". For the most part, the royal princes had been mostly hands off, except for food apparently? Because they kept eating meals with him.

They were weird.

Tommy had few impressions on the king himself, who he had hardly seen since the first day. That was understandable. Really, on the average week, Tommy would have seen Dream even less.

Techno, for all the companionship he had offered during the journey itself, hadn't been around very much. He still talked at mealtimes with Tommy, but it wasn't nearly as much as their camaraderie during the journey.

And Prince Wilbur-well, Tommy didn't have very much to say about the man other than the first time he'd met him. It was weird, the way they met, but nothing else had really happened since.

That was, until Prince Wilbur found him in the library.

Without much guidance from the people around him, Tommy was taking guesses at where he was allowed to be in the castle. The library wasn't far from his room anyway, and the librarian, Karl, hadn't taken any steps to get rid of Tommy, even when he climbed the fucking shelves.

As long as Tommy was damaging anything, he didn't seem to have any problems with him. That was nice.

The library seemed like a safe place, but when Wilbur walked in, all of Tommy's surety left him. The fact that he was also on the shelf could possibly be an issue. Tommy wasn't sure of all of the rules of Antarctic culture, but climbing on the furniture was probably a bad thing.

To his surprise, Wilbur did nothing, and simply invited him on a tour of the castle. Which, once again, being in a foreign country was lonely and Wilbur was a person (he wasn't a Ranboo or Tubbo, but he was a person). Besides, Tommy was bored, and a tour across the castle was interesting.

Maybe spending time with Wilbur would give him insight to how this royal family worked.

"Do you have much snow in the SMP?" Wilbur asked, phrasing it like a genuine question. Maybe it was? Tommy wanted to shake his head to clear his thoughts, but that would be rude in the presence of royalty. He really shouldn't be all twitchy and weird and fucked up in front of people if he could avoid it.

“Not really,” Tommy said, “it is weird, seeing how close our two countries are. No, the most we get in a regular is just a light dusting. It usually melts before really accumulating.”

“Well, we’ve got a bit of the opposite problem here,” Wilbur said, “It makes traveling suck, but, I have to ask you, have you ever played in the snow before?”

“I haven’t,” Tommy said, hoping that wouldn’t piss the prince off.

“Let’s get you dressed for it then,” Wilbur said, excitedly, “if you’re up for it”

Tommy wouldn’t have said no regardless of what he wanted to do.

‘Getting ready to go out in the snow’ apparently meant loading yourself down with several pounds of clothes.

“I don’t want you to get cold,” Prince Wilbur said, like it was a huge concern of his, “If you end up with hypothermia because I got you all wet in the snow, Phil will kill me. I don’t want my dad to kill me, Prince Theseus

Tommy highly doubted that King Philza would give a crap if Tommy got hypothermia, unless maybe it was terminal.

“Do you have many warm clothes?” Prince Wilbur asked, “I know that you said that there wasn’t snow down the SMP, but does it get cold?”

“I have warm clothes,” Tommy said, “just not clothes warm enough to deal with this nightmare.” Tommy stopped for a moment, before realizing what he said was probably really fucking rude. “Shit. I mean, um, oh Prime. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean-” Wilbur was cackling, but he didn’t sound cruel.

“It’s a bit of a freezing hellscape, isn’t it,” Prince Wilbur said. Tommy agreed with a slight nod. “We’ll have to get you warmer clothes. We could get you to a tailor and maybe some of the shops for more casual wear. Or you can borrow some of mine, if you’d like? I might

have some lying around that are too small. If nothing fits you, we can just rob Techno.” Tommy very much did not want to rob Techno, because he was pretty sure he had done something to piss the other off, but he wasn’t sure what.

Ever since they got back to the castle, the other had been colder and less interested in talking to Tommy. Maybe he had just been bored during the journey and took the quickest chance he got to avoid Tommy. After all, it was a unique situation. He was probably over Tommy by now.

“Thank you,” Tommy said, because gratefulness could solve a lot of problems.

By the time Tommy was properly bundled up, he couldn’t really feel the cold anywhere except on his bare face. Everything else had been covered up by Wilbur’s careful dressing. He had covered himself as well accordingly.

“So Tommy,” Wilbur started, “have you ever heard of a snowman?”

Making snowmen kind of sucked, because it was freezing once the snow had melted on him, but also it was fun.

Tommy had been stressed. Even in the absence of politics and having to do all of the things that came with it, he was stressed. Home wasn’t home and he was sleeping in a bed that wasn’t his own, and all of the food was vaguely unfamiliar (they had really good soups there, actually. It made sense, as the Antarctic empire was pretty cold and they needed soups to make up for it.)

But for some reason, shoving snow around even more snow and mushing it into a snowman made him fucking happy.

“This is Technoblade,” Wilbur said, completing his so-called masterpiece. It didn’t resemble the man at all, it was so fucking stupid, but it made Tommy laugh.

“Look,” Wilbur said, shoving his own actual crown onto the snowman, “he just needs like, a cape or something but he looks exactly like the real one.”

Snow Techno did not look like actual Techno.

“Well this is Ranboo,” Tommy insisted, “look, he’s got horns.” Tommy jammed two sticks into the top of the snowman’s head, cracking the skull a little bit. He elected to ignore that.

“Ranboo is ... one of your brother’s, yeah?”

“Yeah,” Tommy said, embarrassed at even something that could make him slightly vulnerable, “Miss the fucker. He started rolling a second snowball for another snowman. “This ones gonna be Tubbo.”

“Why’s he only one ball tall?”

“He’s a short one,” Tommy said, because Tubbo was.

Tommy stood for a moment, looking at the little snow Tubbo and snow Ranboo. He missed them. Fuck. He couldn’t act like this in front of Prince Wilbur of all people.

“Aww,” Wilbur said.

“Miss them,” Tommy said, “I didn't get to say goodbye very well. My father didn’t tell me what was happening until the night before.”

“Really?” Wilbur knew he probably shouldn’t be making judgements on the king of the SMP, in front of his own son, but that was somewhat horrifying. The Dream SMP had been having negotiations with the Empire for months, and the plan had been in the works for a while.

Tommy should have had time to be notified long before the night before. The fuck.

Tommy shrugged.

“Was a little bit shocking,” Tommy said, “Not that it happened, but the timing. Yeah. Wish I had more time to say goodbye to them.” Silence held over the two princes.

“Do you think I'd be able to like, write to them or some shit?” Tommy asked, sounding incredibly hesitant.

“Of course, Theseus,” Wilbur said, “Why would ... we wouldn't stop you. I get get can get some supplies end to your room if you want.”

“I dunno,” Tommy said, “Why would you let me?” There was silence again. Wilbur waited.

“Have you ever made a snowball before?”

-

A half hour later two very wet and cold princes slipped into the castle.

“You're a downright wrong'un, Prince Wilbur,” Tommy said, leaning on him, “you hit me with *ice* .”

“An *accident* !” Wilbur shouted defensively, “I didn't realize that there was a chunk of ice in there. And look, I'm carrying you now! It's fine. You'll be fine. I'm going to bring you to someone.”

“You threw ice at me you fucker! That could be a declaration of war!”

“We were having a snowball fight!”

Tommy didn't think about how the squabbling could probably be heard down the hall. Tommy didn't think about how the tall ceilings could bring his voice past what he wanted to be heard by.

He forgot, ever so slightly, to be afraid of Wilbur, despite all of the power that Wilbur had over him (heir to the throne, heir to the throne of the *enemy*). For a small moment in time, he was relaxed.

"Let me get you supplies for your room," Wilbur said, "So that you can make letters whenever you want to. It takes a bit of time to get letters through to the SMP, probably longer if it's to the castle, I don't know what your vetting system is like or anything."

"That's okay," Tommy said, "It's still better than nothing. And really, I'm grateful."

"Prince Theseus," Wilbur said, once he got permission to come into Tommy's room (Which was weird, this was going to be his castle some day, why did he have to ask Tommy, a guest only because of their kindness, if he could enter his room?) "Why don't you have any warm clothes? You are going to freeze to death on Antarctic soil and your father will slaughter us."

"Get changed into something that isn't sopping and follow me," Wilbur said, "You are going to die if you wear any of that for too long. You can borrow some of mine until we can buy you your own." Tommy might have refused, but Tommy wasn't in a place to say anything, so he dutifully followed Wilbur down the hallway.

Tommy did have to admit, once he was draped in comfortable (albeit, Antarctic colored and branded) clothing, he did feel a lot warmer and better.

"Thank you, Prince Wilbur," Tommy said, actually meaning it.

"Of course," Wilbur said, "Wouldn't want to be a bad host and let a child freeze. And when we're in private, Wilbur's fine. If we are to live together, we might as well be on more familiar terms." Tommy nodded, disrespectfully, that made sense, honestly.

“Tommy,” Tommy said, gesturing towards himself, “Theseus is my given name, but most people-my brothers call me Tommy.”

“Tommy?” Wilbur said, “Tommy’s a nice name. Nice to meet you, Tommy. And here!” Wilbur shoved a boatload of letter paper and envelopes and a trillion other things that Tommy would probably not need in order to write home to Tubbo and Ranboo. “I don’t know what you like and I’m assuming that you use the same letter writing stuff back home, but I don’t know! So!”

“Thanks,” Tommy said, “You-you didn’t have to. This isn’t-this isn’t going to get you in trouble, right? Or get you hurt-”

“Tommy,” Wilbur said, the sharpness in his voice stinging in Tommy’s ears, “Phil would never hurt me. Or you. Phil would never hurt either of us.”

“Wilbur,” Tommy said, voice shaky, “I mean-you can’t promise that. We don’t even have a timeline or anything. How would you know? What if King Philza just decides-”

“He wouldn’t do that,” Wilbur said, “Tommy, Phil would never-”

“He *could*, Wilbur, maybe you just don’t know that side of him. King Philza was willing to declare war on us- *me*, what makes it different now. He isn’t just your *dad*, Wilbur, he’s the king of a global superpower, who happens to want war with my dad.” Tommy took a deep breath. Fuck, that was too aggressive.

“He doesn’t *want* war, Tommy, and regardless, that’s not what this is about. I know my dad.”

“Yeah? And I thought I knew mine until he fucking threw me out,” Tommy said, “It’s not like I had the choice to come here. It was this or your dad killed everyone I cared about.”

“Tommy, that’s unreasonable! That’s not even how war works. I’m sorry your dad doesn’t fucking love you, but-”

“Excuse me? I- at least even if he doesn’t love me, he takes care of his fucking nation and doesn’t kidnap other people’s kids.”

“It was a negotiation!”

“Like there was ever a choice.” Tommy turned to face Wilbur and stared him dead in the eyes. It turned out to be a bad decision, because Wilbur’s eyes were hard and cold, like the coal eyes of a snowman, only Tommy knew that Wilbur eyes were capable of warmth, and somehow, Tommy had made it go away by being Tommy.

This was why masking was better. This was why letting his guard down was a mistake.

Looking Wilbur in the eyes made Tommy’s eyes start watering. How ... embarrassing. Tommy knew better than this. Knew better. Knew to be less vulnerable and more tolerant, and he was supposed to be here as a bargaining tool, and Philza and Wilbur and Technoblade had all treated him like a guest so far, but that would end soon, and it would go back to being like it was at home when Dream was angry at him, and he wasn’t allowed to see Tubbo or Ranboo because he’d corrupt them but he already couldn’t see either of them because Dream kicked him out of home and-

-and

And Tommy was there all of a sudden, home, but not the good side of home. The side of home that he had to carefully tread on so that Dream didn’t force him into isolation. The part of home that ignored the weight the crown had on Tubbo’s head, that treated Ranboo like an experiment or an animal rather than a prince.

The part of home that made Tommy flinch back from Wilbur when he stepped forward and fumble into his own pockets for anything that he could offer as a sacrifice.

Tommy didn’t have anything though. He didn’t have anything anymore. There was nothing he could throw down, nothing he could burn to save his own skin. He was going to die, and it was going to lead to a war, and everything was going to go wrong and it was going to be all of his fault.

Tommy couldn’t let himself die. Death meant dooming the people he loved to suffering for a very long time, if not forever. It meant that innocent people in the Dream SMP would have

to take up arms and kill innocent people in the Antarctic Empire so that the bloodlust of Tommy's father and Wilbur's father could be satiated. So that an unloved son could be used as an excuse for warfare.

Tommy refused to be a catalyst.

He had lost track of himself a little bit ago, only knowing that he wasn't where he wanted to be and that was enough for him. He couldn't hear. He couldn't see. He could hardly feel the wall behind his back.

Coming back hurt worse. His head hurt, his face was sticky and his nose was running. Worst of all, he could hear Wilbur talking.

"Tommy," Wilbur said, "Tommy, can you hear me?"

Tommy nodded his head once. It was all he could manage, and he knew it was rude, but he had just had a huge fight with the crown prince and insulted the king, and really, things weren't going to get worse from here so Tommy might as well go all out. There was no reason to mask anymore once you had reached the line and obliterated it, was there?

"Good, that's good. You're doing incredible, okay? Absolutely incredible." Wilbur took a breath. "Can you open your eyes for me, Dear? Yeah, like that. Can you see me?"

"Sort of," Tommy answered, which was more than enough for Wilbur to start reigning his compliments back down. Soft praises said with an even softer voice, because heck, Tommy deserved it so badly.

"That's good, okay? That's really good, can you name four other things you can see?" Tommy was silent for a moment.

"Um," Tommy said, and his head moved ever so slightly, which Wilbur took as a victory. Tommy was coming back to himself, slowly, but he was doing it. From his experience with Technoblade, Wilbur sort of knew what to do, but not everything. The two of them were similar in many ways, and their propensity for panic attacks were apparently similar, but the way they handled them were very different.

Wilbur hoped he was doing what was best for Tommy.

“Well, I can see the light? Um, lighting up the hallway. The wall. The rug. Um. my hair.”

“Good job,” Wilbur encouraged, “What’s something you can feel?”

“Is it okay to repeat?”

“Of course,” Wilbur assured, “repeat away.” Wilbur had to be honest, he always forgot the steps in the grounding process he had “learned” and the order everything was supposed to go in, but he figured if Tommy was getting grounded, then it was better than nothing.

“The wall,” Tommy said, “You.”

“Nice, Tommy,” Wilbur said, “Anything you can hear?”

“Hmm,” Tommy said, “Footsteps?” Fuck. Tommy was right. There was someone walking down the hallway. Normally, that wouldn’t be a bad thing, but Wilbur didn’t want anyone to walk in and destabilize Tommy, and Wilbur didn’t really want to explain what he did that was so stupid it put Tommy in a state like this.

Later. He’d say something later, he wasn’t just going to hide it, but fuck. Fucking hell, how could he have let this happen.

“Yeah,” Wilbur said, but his tone had changed and Tommy picked it up. He still looked nervous. “Nice. Good job. Yeah. You feeling ... more there?” Tommy blinked his eyes a few times and straightened himself out a little bit. One hand wandered and ran through his hair, but from everything that Wilbur had seen of the other boy, his hair never really straightened.

“Wil,” Techno said, stepping into the room after a cursory knock that he didn’t wait for an answer to (he and Wilbur had a fairly open door policy. They both liked their privacy, but it wasn’t really a big issue) “Dad wanted to know if-”

Technoblade paused when he saw Wilbur kneeling by the shaken Tommy.

“Wilbur, what the fuck.”

“I messed up,” Wilbur said, “A bit. And we also played in the snow.”

“We did,” Tommy agreed, voice sounding like had been crying, which he had been. Heck. Wilbur should probably give him something to clean up his face. And apologize. A lot.

“Alright then,” Technoblade said.

“We bonded,” Wilbur said, “and then I got aggressive and screwed it up. I’m sorry, Tommy, that was immature of me.” It really was. He was far older than Tommy, and in a far more stable position. He should have been able to control himself better. But Tommy merely waved him off.

“It’s fine,” Tommy said, “I don’t-don’t worry about it Wilbur, it’s not a big deal.” Tommy had a full blown panic attack, so Wilbur was inclined to think it was a big deal, but he wasn’t really in a position to push the matter. “I’m a little homesick,” Tommy informed Technoblade, “it made me a little dramatic. It isn’t a big deal.”

Technoblade grunted.

“See the thing is, Theseus,” Technoblade started, in a mock annoyed tone, “If you get hurt, that’s pretty much on me, you see. Well, me and the rest of my family. We’re supposed to be takin’ care of you and stuff yeah?”

“I guess,” Tommy said, “um,” But Technoblade waved him off.

“If you aren’t well,” Technoblade said, “That’s on us, and we need to help you feel better, okay? You deserve to feel better. So how can we help you?”

“I want to go home,” Tommy said, a moment of weakness for him.

“You know I can’t do that,” Technoblade said, “As much as I want you to, we’ve got an agreement with your father.”

“I know,” Tommy said, “and he’d probably kill me if I came back at this point.” For some reason unknown to Wilbur, Technoblade completely just blazed over that bombshell.

“Is there anything else?”

“I want to sleep,” Tommy said, “I don’t-I just want to sleep. I don’t want to be alone. I don’t know anything here.”

“Okay, Theseus,” Technoblade said, scooping up the younger one probably intending to put him in Wilbur’s bed.

“Tommy,” Tommy said, sleepy voice sounding bossy, “Tommy is better.”

“Tommy then,” Techno said, “I’m Techno.” Tommy was struggling to keep his eyes open, simply looking at the older prince with mild acceptance.

“Tech,” sleepy Tommy said at last, before dozing off.

-

The most annoying thing about living in the Antarctic wasn’t the cold, it was the nightmares that sleeping in an unfamiliar place brought. Tommy had never experienced it much in his childhood, usually sleeping in the same place. After he’d been moved from the nursery in the castle, he had slept in the same room since he was a child.

Only once when he was younger, he had been whisked away in the middle of the night due to an assassin threat. He had slept beside Tubbo and Ranboo in an unfamiliar room. He had been hushed, when he woke up screaming in the night because he was causing distress to the other two princes and could easily get them found if there really were an assassin in the castle (There was. He had been apprehended, having not succeeded in killing any of the royal family. Everyone had counted themselves lucky that night)

At the time, they had chalked it up to the stress of having someone loose in the castle, but now, Tommy wasn't so sure. None of the dreams, he was pretty certain, had centered around the assassin.

He was just afraid. It was ever-present, and Tommy felt like he should be able to do something about it to make it go away. He was raised to be better than this, all of his siblings had been. He was fearless and strong like Tubbo. He wasn't like Ranboo, who, sure, tended to get afraid sometimes and not take a stand (no matter what people said, his brother did have a backbone. And also, Ranboo would kill anyone who looked at either Tubbo or Tommy wrong, so like good luck)

(Coincidentally, Tubbo or Tommy would also kill you for saying that Ranboo had no backbone, and it would be really bloody, so it was generally advisable to just ... not insult any of the princes, even if no one else was around to think badly of you.)

Point was, Ranboo had redeeming traits that made it okay. Made up for it.

Tommy didn't.

(Tommy neglected that both Tubbo and Ranboo would also kill anyone for insinuating he was useless, up to and even particularly including the king)

Tommy woke up alone in his room in the middle of the Antarctic Empire screaming. It was a dreadful noise, and would probably echo off the walls of the castle. He clamped his hands over his mouth and shut up, but it was too late. He had no idea how long he had been at it before he woke up and stopped himself from fucking up more.

There were heavy footsteps in the hallway, and suddenly, Prince Technoblade of all people, dressed in sleep clothes, but looking ready to kill, sword in hand appeared in his doorway.

"Are you alright?" Technoblade asked, when he had looked around and found no danger after a moment.

“Oh Primes,” Tommy said, “I’m so fucking sorry.” his sleep addled brain didn’t seem to have much a filter, “Fuck. Just. I’m perfectly fine. Thank you. I’m just a fucking idiot. It was a nightmare.”

“Oh.” Prince Technoblade sheathed his sword. “Are you alright? Will you be able to fall back asleep?”

“I’m alright,” Tommy said, “but I probably won’t fall back asleep. Sorry.”

“I guess I should have known,” Technoblade said, looking slightly embarrassed, “But you can’t really be too careful.”

“I guess not,” Tommy said, more focused on falling back asleep than the conversation.

“Would you like for me to leave you alone?” Tommy didn’t answer for a moment, because really, he didn’t. But it would also be so incredibly rude of him to just. Ask technoblade to leave, so he wasn’t about to do that. His answer stalled. Also rude. He needed to-

“I can stay, if you’d like,” Technoblade said. Tommy opened his mouth to answer, because fuck yes, no, heck, what was going to happen.

“You don’t have to,” Tommy said, in case it was simply a polite offer and Techno would get pissed if Tommy actually took him up on that, “But I wouldn’t mind. Only, I’m sure I interrupted your sleep. Apologies.”

“ ‘ts fine. Not like I was sleeping anyways,” Technoblade said, “I was just in the library. Would you ... like to join me?”

A few minutes later, Tommy was wandering off with Technoblade down the dark hallway. It wasn’t lit at all, but Techno seemed to know where he was going, which made sense considering the man lived here.

Tommy knew the way to the library fairly well, so long as he had solid daylight and a decent amount of sleep. He had neither.

“Here,” Technoblade said, shoving a door open after only a short walk, “This is the best and only place in the whole castle.” The library was mostly dark, but there was a comfortably lit seating area that looked like it was in slight disarray, probably from Technoblade rushing off after Tommy’s screams.

It was unsettling probably, to hear a stranger's screams in the dead of night in your family's quarters.

“You like reading?” Techno asked, scooping up an already opened book.

“Sometimes,” Tommy said, “I’m-it’s harder when I’m tired.” Technoblade nodded like this was a reasonable thing and not just a stupid issue Tommy had.

“That’s fine,” Technoblade said, “I’ll just read it to you. C’mere.” Tommy tucked himself into the other side of the couch that Technoblade was sitting on.

“Have you heard of myths before, Tommy?” Tommy nodded. “That’s what this book is. A lot of myths. Let’s start with a Hmm, want to start with your namesake?”

“Me?”

“Theseus, right? He was a hero in the ancient’s mythology”

“Hmm, and I’m named after him?”

“Apparently. Don’t know where else anyone would get that name.” Silence hung between the two, but it wasn’t a terrible silence.

“My mom named me,” Tommy admitted, “I never met her. I don’t really use Theseus very much between people that know me, which I guess is just Tubbo and Ranboo but-” Tommy took a breath. “That’s kind of cool. I-yeah, read to me. Please.”

“Alright then, Tommy,” Technoblade said, before continuing the story. Tommy fell asleep before Theseus even defeated the minotaur.

-

“Technoblade.”

Technoblade ignored the voice.

“Technoblade.”

Techno didn’t stir.

“Techno you little shit, wake up.” He cracked one of his eyes open.

“What.”

“Not so loud, you’re going to wake up Tommy.” Technoblade flicked his eyes open fully. Oh. he’d fallen asleep on the couch. On the bright side it meant he had gotten some sleep, which Phil should be appreciative of instead of yelling at him (how rude >:).

“You were yellin’ at me first,” Technoblade said, “You could have woken him up.”

“I didn’t,” PHil said, “but you could have freaked out quite a few people if no one had expected to find you in this room.”

“What, did I whisk away a child?”

“Yes, Technoblade. Do you have any idea how worried I was?”

“For the point five seconds it took you to find us?”

“Techno.”

“Fine, fine. Phil. He was screaming last night. Thought he was getting attacked. Apparently it was just a nightmare. He was pretty spooked so I took him in here and read to him. And he’s been sleeping like the baby he is ever since.”

Phil sighed.

“That’s good,” Phil sighed, “thank you. I-I should really be doing more. I’d want Dream to be, if one you were-but.” Phil stopped. “Sorry Techno, thanks for getting him.”

“Of course,” Techno said, “Also, I think he’s bored, you should probably start him on classes soon.”

“I will,” Phil said, “as soon as I get his documents from home.”

“That’s a good idea,” Techno conceded, “You should really talk to him more. I think he’s scared of you.”

“I stole him from home,” Phil said, “of course he’s scared of me. But yeah. I-he’s different from you and Wil, you know. He’s not my kid.”

“No, he’s not.” Techno sighed, because it was true. Phil had adopted Techno, and there had been no around to contest that. Wilbur was Phil’s own flesh and blood, but Tommy already had parents and a family, and if the world kept spinning the way it was supposed to, Tommy would go home.

Back to Dream, who he was afraid of, and back home, where he belonged.

Techno knew there wasn’t a point in getting attached.

He also knew that he already was.

-

Phil did not necessarily agree with his own policies. It wasn't a very honest way to run a kingdom, but between burning down his kingdom and going against his conscience, Phil, regrettably, went against his conscience.

He had sixteen year old Prince Theseus under his care now, until either the political climate stabilized, they found a better way to hold leverage that both countries agreed to, or war broke out, at which case Phil would be expected to ...

It was a good thing that Dream did not know what kind of man Phil was. If he knew Phil's inner psyche, he would know that while holding Theseus hostage was on the table, killing him never was. Perhaps it was expected, perhaps it would be the "right" thing to do, but Theseus was young and innocent, and it would be in cold blood and Phil couldn't bring himself to do it.

Still, it would be stupid to grow close to Theseus, Phil knew. He knew his own nature, even if Dream didn't. Phil would meet the kid and he'd probably fall in love, even though he had two sons of his own already. And once Phil was connected, Dream would have something to hold over his head.

Philza would care for Theseus as a ward, as a child under his care, but nothing more. Theseus could not be family (no matter what Wilbur wanted. No matter how many fond tales Technoblade said, or how cute he was as he slept. No matter how much Theseus seemed to need a father). Philza-Phil would not survive another son.

Especially not the son of Dream.

Philza didn't know Dream, not in any personal sense of the word. He knew of his exploits-of his brutality on the battlefield, his tenacity, but he didn't *know* him. But Phil could see the

remnants of him on his sons. Philza had met Prince Tubbo once before, when he was younger. And for a child, the boy had been terrifying. Charming, certainly, and innocent in most ways that children are, but there was a trained brutality in his eyes. A trained uncertainty that Phil had seen in few royal children. Back then, he had hoped for the best for the boy, completely unable to interfere in any way.

Now he had Tommy in front of him, the same glimmer in his eyes, and Phil *could* interfere, but he shouldn't.

Tommy was a link between a world of war and a world of peace, that's all he was on the documents for negotiation. Philza could do his best to make him welcome, but in the end, he and Dream were using the boy as a tool. He could pretend to be superior to Dream, because he didn't trade his own sons for peace, but that superiority fell quickly when he took others' sons.

Tommy was a homesick sixteen year old, that's what he was to Techno and Wilbur, who had both grown fond of him. Tommy missed his brothers and was lonely, but also incredibly interested in learning about the place he was in.

Fuck.

Philza couldn't often make meals with his children. There were advisors to meet and papers to sign and events and thousands of people who all wanted his personal attention. It was easier, when he had Kristen. When the boys were younger, he tried harder, but now that both of them were in their twenties, it was easier to skip meals and visit with them later. He still had a close family life with all of them.

He still loved them, and they still loved him, and they were a healthy family, now plus Tommy.

Primes, Tommy.

That brought him to his current problem.

See, it was an uncharacteristically calm day. Phil wasn't putting out too many fires, he had just gotten all of his paperwork finished, and he could actually eat dinner with his children and Tommy.

Case and point: Phil did not hate Tommy in any sense of the word. Tommy was nothing more than a pawn in this situation, his thoughts and opinions and personality caused none of this. It was a scale so much bigger than an individual, even if that individual was a prince. He was someone Dream cared about, at least in the political sphere, and he'd keep Dream in line and Phil's people safe. Tommy was doing both of them a great service. So, Phil was far from hating Tommy.

On the other hand, Tommy made things complicated, and Phil didn't like his life getting any more complicated than it already was.

(He complicated everything for himself when he'd adopted Techno, was he decided to have Wilbur, when he married that honest to Prime Death herself)

None of his rationals held up when he looked Tommy in the eye over a bowl of soup.

"Have you been adjusting well, Prince Theseus?" Phil started, when the terrible clank of forks got too much for him.

It had been a long time since Phil had a new child in his house, and never had he had a child staying long term in his home without the intention of adopting them.

"Your hospitality has been much appreciated, your highness," Tommy said, although he might as well have said nothing for all of the substance in his words.

"Aww, Tommy," Wilbur said, which was very much Wilbur, "Don't be like that." Tommy tried to finish what he was eating, swallowing it down before opening his mouth.

“Like what Wilbur?” Tommy asked, his voice shifting slightly into what Phil realized was simply a more relaxed voice, “I am being normal.” Wilbur rolled his eyes.

“No, you’re being weird,” Wilbur insisted, “This is literally my dad.” Wilbur reached his hand over and brushed Tommy’s hair over, though wrestling with it did nothing. “Relax.”

“I am relaxed,” Tommy said, “And I meant no disrespect, my apologies, your-” Wilbur bonked Tommy on the head. “Highness.” a moment of silence. “What the fuck Wilbur. I mean, ah, I apologize, I don’t-” Philza laughed, and waved him off.

“It’s fine Theseus,” Phil said, “Wilbur’s just like that.” Phil laughed, but he was still unsettled by the way that Theseus was acting. It wasn’t his fault, of course. It was only natural, when faced with possibly enemy royalty, when faced with a stranger to act like that, but it was unsettling, to be treated like a danger by such a young child.

Phil didn’t want to be the bad guy. He didn’t want this, but this was what he had chosen, wasn’t it? This or war.

Dream gave him very little choice. And while Phil knew his strength on the battlefield (knew where his wife stood, and that was beside him. Knew that Techno was far more terrifying on the battlefield than off of it, although he was so much better, so much more worth it than the battlefield). The SMP would not win, not in a fair war.

But Dream was tricky, and the cost of life, the cost of the peace ... Phil couldn’t bring himself to go through with it.

Phil looked at the anxious child across from him at the table. He may have taken on more than he could handle.

Chapter End Notes

If this chapter was horribly scattered and inconsistent no it wasn't <3 /j

I hope you enjoyed :]

If it cost me my life, man, I'd save my only friend

Chapter Summary

tubbo moment

Chapter Notes

this is shorter than usual, but also i'm getting sick and i've fallen asleep multiple times today so please take pity on me lol

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tubbo was angry. Not someone-pissed-me-off-and-wrecked-my-day angry. Not you-annoyed-me angry. No, this was worse.

Dream had the audacity to send Tommy away, and then get upset that Tubbo was upset. And apparently, confused? The man actually took time out of his day to talk to Tubbo. Rare, but not as unheard of as him talking to Ranboo or Tommy (although it wasn't like he could talk to Tommy anymore, since he sent him across the world to the empire, who could probably slaughter Tommy and then their country without a second thought.

(They called the Emperor the Angel of Death, it was rumored that he had even married her, a love affair and a child. Stuff of legends, but the man had wings growing from his back, and Tubbo had never met him on the battlefield, but he was willing to bet that Death wouldn't side with Tubbo.

No matter. Tubbo didn't need gods at his side to kill)

Despite his feelings, Tubbo sat docile as his father talked at him.

“Tubbo, Tubbo,” Dream said, “Be reasonable. Tommy couldn’t have stayed. This was for the best, okay? I don’t know why you’re so hung up on this, but you need to get over it before it starts affecting how you rule the kingdom, okay?” When Tubbo had refused to listen to Dream’s more gentle attempts, his father had switched tactics quickly.

“Would you rather I’d have sent Ranboo? He’d be more vulnerable, you know. Would you rather I’d have sent thousands to war, Tubbo? You are going to be my heir, surely you understand that in the grand scheme of everything, Tommy isn’t important. He wasn’t going to be very useful here, there’s no point.”

“He’s our brother,” Tubbo insisted, “You-he’s going to die.”

“If the Antarctic Empire keeps their word,” Dream said, “Then, yes.” Before Tubbo could rage, Dream shushed him, a sound Tubbo was conditioned to respond to (if Tubbo didn’t he could get hurt, Ranboo could get hurt, Tommy was already suffering, in a foreign country, out of Tubbo’s control, but still)

(Maybe it was his fault that Tommy was there in the first place. Maybe this was Dream punishing him)

I’m so sorry Tommy

“Tubbo,” Dream said, “I tried to teach you so well, you just need to be a little less stupid. Tommy was disposable. He was in the way of the kingdom prospering. The Antarctic was going to declare war on us either way, you know that.” Tubbo didn’t, but he didn’t know what to believe. The only information he got was from Dream, and he didn’t want to believe Dream. But he didn’t want anyone else getting hurt because of him.

“He’s useful like this,” Dream assured, “You don’t want your brother to be useless, do you?” With that, apparently, Dream felt his mission was accomplished and he left his oldest in the library. “And Tubbo? If *you* don’t want to be useless, I’d advise you don’t go against me. Unless, of course, you want Ranboo to ...” His father swept out of the room.

Tubbo took a deep breath. Another.

Everything in Tubbo wanted to rebel, but Ranboo ... and if Tubbo was dead, he wouldn't be able to help anyone. If Tubbo were dead, even if he took Dream down with him, Ranboo would have the weight of the crown on his head.

The weight of being Dream's son was enough.

Tubbo had to do something.

He couldn't-he couldn't let Dream go through with his plan.

Tommy would die.

So alone in the library, Tubbo took out a pen and drafted a letter.

-

Across the world, another boy sat drafting a letter in another library.

Tommy was about ready to smash his face into the table he was writing on. About every other word he wrote got scratched out, and Tommy wasn't entirely sure what he wanted to say, just that he wanted to say something.

At home, he could just fucking talk to Ranboo and Tubbo, and that solved every problem, but in a letter? Was it worth it to try to make some Tommy characteristic joke? Was it worth it to try to describe how he'd been when he knew that they might not be able to read his letter if the empire deemed it a security risk or a privilege he didn't earn.

Certainly, he wouldn't be able to complain about the king, who he really wanted to complain about but had no ears to listen to him. Sure, Wilbur and Techno complained about him all of the time in private, but Tommy was below them, and that probably wasn't a privilege extended to him.

Tommy also didn't know who would be reading it when it got to the SMP. Certainly, Dream probably wasn't about to let communication, no matter who it was from, get to the princes without any interference. Even Tommy's mail got checked when he had lived at home.

Ugh. Privacy.

"Are you okay there," Wilbur asked, "You seem ... your face is awfully screwed up there."

"I'm writing." Tommy said, before realizing that duh, that was obvious, as he was holding a fucking pen and paper. Before Wilbur could point that out, Tommy continued. "Home. Since you said I was allowed to. If i'm still allowed to."

"Tommy," Wilbur said, "Of course you're allowed to write home."

"Thank you," Tommy said, because Wilbur was nice, and it would suck to lose privileges. Wilbur sat down next to him.

"Are you alright? Because you're kind of hunched over like a gremlin or something." Tommy scowled, but it was true. He was sitting on the same couch that Technoblade had read him to sleep on, but he had pulled the table closer and was hunching over his paper.

"I'm fine," Tommy said. He scratched at his paper. Scratched out what he wrote. Stared at it some more

"I miss them," Tommy said, "my siblings." He stopped for a moment, checking the environment. He had to keep himself on guard, especially since his guard had been slipping recently. He didn't want to overshare or annoy Wilbur. The man had been so nice to him so far, but he could change on a whim if he wanted. Maybe this whole time he was just trying to lure Tommy into a false sense of security.

It wouldn't be the first time somebody had done that.

"Yeah?" Wilbur said, "I would too, honestly, even though Techno can be a pain. He's my brother." Without being separated from Technoblade, Wilbur couldn't really understand, but the sentiment was nice. It was the most someone had tried to empathize with Tommy since he had gotten into the country

(Techno had while they were traveling, that was probably out of boredom more than anything, because he hadn't talked to Tommy since they got back, not really)

It was nice.

If talking about Tubbo and Ranboo didn't already make him want to cry, it definitely would have.

"I'm afraid they're going to forget me," Tommy said, airing the concerns that he had kept to himself since he had arrived in the Antarctic Empire, "We're not like-I mean, obviously, they aren't babies, but well, out of sight, out of mind, right?" Tommy stopped so that Wilbur wouldn't hear his voice crack. He had his head turned towards his knees, and he pulled them towards himself.

He didn't want Wilbur to see. Hesitantly, he was starting to trust the man, because what else could he do? The alternative was trusting no one, the smartest choice. But the Antarctic was cold, and Tommy would freeze with no one by his side.

That didn't mean he wanted him to see him cry. There were two people in the world allowed to see him cry, and neither of them were here right now.

Crying wasn't safe. It never was. Tommy wasn't going to fucking cry.

"Tommy-" Wilbur started, almost on impulse before he stopped to think through what he was actually going to say. This wasn't a situation where he could just charge recklessly in. This

was ... the problem was far deeper than what Wilbur could really help with, but it was Wilbur's family's fault that Tommy was in this situation. He was the closest who could help. "Tommy, I don't think your siblings could ever forget you."

"... he'd kill me for saying this, but Ranboo has memory issues, sometimes. Did you know that?" There was a pained tone in Tommy's voice, but Tommy continued. "Not all of the time. Not often. But he can't remember his time before ... before us. The castle." The memory issues may not have been something that he had any knowledge of, but the three princes of the SMP were a well known thing, however much Dream tried to hide it.

Dream did not have a queen or a king at his side. There was no monarch at his side. Dream's children weren't his, if only biologically speaking. It wasn't much of a scandal to many people. The empire themselves had adopted children, it was perfectly normal.

But with Dream the acquisition of his children was ... interesting. Tubbo, his crown and his oldest, could have been snatched from the streets for all anyone knew, as there was no information on how he came to be. Tommy himself was much the same. But one did not simply find an enderman hybrid outside on the porch.

Prince Ranboo had come from somewhere.

"He might ... he might forget me. And Tubbo is ... Tubbo is amazing. He's a troublemaker yeah? But also an absolute sweetheart. I-I love them both. Miss them both. But they might- I couldn't blame them if they-I'm not. Well, you're the crown, so you probably wouldn't understand, but I'm the third, you know."

And oh.

Wilbur did not like what Tommy was insinuating.

"I'm the *third*," Tommy stressed again, "It's not-I mean. My father makes good decisions, I'm sure you won't agree with the two of you teetering on the edge of war, but he does. This was-this was right. For the country."

And Wilbur, while it may not have been his place, made up his mind there.

“But for you?” Wilbur asked, “You’re just a child.” The Antarctic Empire wasn’t going to hurt Tommy ... without war.

Tommy brushed his hands across his face like he was wiping tears from his eyes.

“Yeah well,” Tommy said, “There’s a whole country full of children over there, Wil. I don’t see why I should be prioritized.”

Silence fell.

“I wish you could go home,” Wilbur said, and he meant it. If there was a way to keep the two kingdoms from war without placing a child between them and saying “we don’t want to kill him” he would.

If he was in charge, he could. But Phil and Dream ...

... Phil and Dream evidently had different ideas.

Still, surely there was something Wilbur could do.

“I didn’t want them to forget me. I gave them a compass, you know,” Tommy said, “I didn’t bring much with me when I came here, but I brought pretty much all my valuables, seeing as I don’t know w-if I’m going home. But I had a compass. It was ... it was from before I came to live with Dream. I left it with them, and you know, since the Antarctic is in the north, I thought it might ... remind them of me.” Tommy paused. “It’ll hurt them to remember me, and I left them something to remember me. That’s, oh Prime, that was pretty selfish, wasn’t it.

Wilbur shook his head.

“No, Tommy,” Wilbur said, “that’s not-of course you want the people you love to love you. It’s-Tommy you haven’t done anything wrong. You and your brothers ... you had no choice.”

“Neither did you.” Tommy said, “You didn’t choose this. Not your fault King Philza’s your dad.”

Wilbur stopped fighting Tommy on that point, but he made a resolution to himself.

Wilbur was going to help Tommy, but any means possible.

In the morning, Wilbur went down to Sam’s shop.

“Could you make a compass point south?” Wilbur asked a very surprised Sam.

-

Tommy was, quite honestly, afraid of Wilbur at this moment. Wilbur wasn’t, on his own, really a scary person, if you ignored all of the power he had at his fingertips and all of the people that would kill on his command.

Wilbur isn’t scary , Tommy tried to tell himself, to no avail, *Wilbur wouldn’t hurt me* .

Wilbur was trying to get him alone, that much was clear. Tommy wasn’t sure why though. It was terrible, and it made Tommy’s nerves all fucked up. All Tommy knew was that he had spilled some of his guts to the guy, and now Wilbur wanted to get his attention.

“Tommy,” Wilbur said, after they finished breakfast (because Tommy couldn’t lurk around people any longer after that), “Tommy I hope this isn’t um ... to forward? Or no, just. I hope that you like it.” Tommy glanced around the library, which was pretty much the only place he felt safe, to avoid Wilbur’s eyes.

“Here.” Wilbur placed something in one of Tommy’s hands. The metal was smooth and cool, and the weight was familiar. Not the same as his old one, but familiar.

“Is ...”

“Yeah.”

Tommy held the compass tightly in his grasp. Fuck. This was. God, he couldn’t. This was. It wasn’t the same as the compass that he had back home. Worse, carved ever so carefully into the surface were *their* names. Tubbo carved across the top and Ranboo on the back.

What, did Wilbur want to see him cry again? Rude. But also-

“-thank you.” Tommy clutched the compass to his chest.

“Of course,” Wilbur said, “Anything to ... I just want to help you feel more comfortable.”

Wilbur seemed to want to linger, but he left the room anyway.

When he was gone, Tommy sobbed. As nice as Wilbur was to him (for now, Tommy reminded himself, because it wouldn’t due to forget the nature of their arrangement, to forget that the moment that his father slipped up inevitably, they’d either kill Tommy or-or worse.), Tommy still just wanted to be with his brothers.

He hoped they were okay. But Dream? Would he risk hurting one of his brothers? One of the ones actually in line for the throne, one of the ones he had chosen rather than had dragged to him but one of the children he actually wanted.

But without Tommy as a scapegoat, as a shield, who was to say?

(It had been a theme in Tommy's childhood, that he was less than his brothers, and even if it was rarely spoken out loud by anyone that wasn't Dream, Tommy had gotten the message very easily. He had less attendants, his education was less important, if he got hurt, it wasn't a very big deal until Tubbo threw a fit about it (and Tubbo always threw a fit because Tubbo was absolutely incredible).

The flexibility had come with neglect. So he had taken the fall for things (and in return, his brothers loved him. They'd ... they'd probably love him regardless, but that was what Tommy was for, after all. Neither of the other two were dying any time soon, and Tommy was just there as a ... buffer? Yeah, he wasn't worth much in the end.

It was all okay. Everything was okay, as long as his brothers were.

He clutched the compass harder and watched the needle, knowing that somewhere out there, his brothers had a needle pointing towards him.

Chapter End Notes

sorry if this sucked, but i am sleepy and if i don't publish it, i probably won't be able to publish anything.

thank you so much for the comments/kudos on the last few chapters. it's more reception than i expected and you are all very lovely

Am I pretty enough? to love back

Chapter Summary

Phil's denial arc continues, lol

Chapter Notes

I've added chapter titles to the fic. They don't really mean anything, it's just lyrics from music I was listening to while writing. I just like having titles.

Anyways, I've just started my school semester, so updates might be even more ... sporadic? Idk, but if I don't update for a while, I promise I'm not dead, just drowning in school work.

That being said, enjoy! Pls

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Phil was going to do it this time.

He was going to have an actually productive conversation with the kid. He was going to talk to Tommy and get everything straightened out. Whatever fears it was that Tommy had, he was going to smooth over in hopes that it would make the kid more comfortable around them all. It wasn't fair to Tommy to live in fear when he was safe.

(If Dream attacked, would Tommy be safe?)

Finding Tommy wasn't too difficult, since both Wilbur and Techno were busy with schooling. Schooling was something that Phil needed to talk with Tommy about too. He was definitely young enough.

Just another thing that Phil would have to talk to Tommy about. It was Tommy's life, after all, and in the absence of Tommy's father, it was up to Phil to make those decisions for

Tommy. That was the promise he had made the SMP, and he wouldn't go back on his promise.

He was, as apparently always, in the library. Don't get Phil wrong, the library was absolutely lovely, but the amount of time the kid apparently spent in there was ... astronomical.

"Hey Mate," Phil said, walking into the library trying not to walk awkwardly. It was his library. This was just sixteen (seventeen? Nineteen? No no Phil was pretty sure that he was the seventeen year old) year old that he was watching. There was nothing scary about a sixteen year old. If anything, he was just ... homesick. And homesick children weren't scary, they just needed help. Yeah.

"Mm?" Theseus looked up from the letter he had been writing. He looked relaxed, comfortable, tucked carefully away into the warmth of the couch. They kept the library fairly warm (not enough to damage the books), as it was one of the more used places in the castle, and the high ceilings could make it a little drafty. Theseus saw Phil, and immediately, the relaxed atmosphere fell.

In an instant, Theseus was on his knees, and *oh*.

This was really the first time Tommy met him alone, wasn't it.

Phil had forgotten that even though he was relaxed in his inner quarters, even though he pushed aside formality from those he welcomed as family, Theseus wouldn't know to do that. No, to Theseus, there was a foreign king in front of him who was holding his fate in his hands. One he had possibly been disrespectful too.

Prime, Phil wished he was more emotionally intelligent.

Theseus wasn't standing up. He was on the floor. The cold floor. His clothes weren't nearly warm enough for this. Did Theseus even have warm clothes? Phil shook away his worried thoughts. There was a child in front of him, of course he was worried, anyone would be. He wasn't replacing Theseus' father, he wasn't even acting parental. This was normal behavior, that anyone would do.

Theseus was practically face planting with the way he was bowing.

Phil knew that style of bow. It was common in the SMP in instances of offense, though why a *prince* would be so good at it, Phil didn't know.

Either way, it was kind of distressing, and Phil was going to make him stop now.

"It's alright," Phil said, "I just came to check on you. While we're not in court, I don't mind excusing all of the more ... royal addresses. We're at home, yeah? Relax." Phil tried to be as gentle with his words as he could, but they still seemed to scare Theseus. He tried to hide it, but he was vulnerable on the floor. Instead of standing entirely, Theseus merely raised his face off of the floor and settled onto his knees rather than prostrated on the floor. He wasn't looking at Phil.

Ah. A demonstration was in order then.

Phil knelt down beside him. There was no easy way to tell Tommy to rise without reinforcing the idea that Theseus should have been bowing at first regardless, so Phil would get on his level. It had worked with Technoblade before.

(When Techno came, he didn't have much of a concept of royalty, but he had a very strong concept of hierarchy. Phil wasn't sure if that was common in Piglins or if it was just due to the way that Techno had been raised. Either way, it wasn't healthy, but Techno had learned, and now his son was **too** fucking disrespectful)

Hopefully, it would work with Theseus.

"It's alright," Phil repeated, and all that he could see was confusion. Yeah, so Phil should have talked to him earlier. That was on him.

“I apologize,” Theseus said, although it was pretty clear he didn’t know what he was apologizing for, “I didn’t mean any offense, though I understand-” Theseus cut himself off, apparently waiting for Phil’s judgement.

Fucking hell, what was he supposed to do with this.

“Can you move up to the couch?” Phil requested, “I’ve been meaning to talk to you, and I think it might be more comfortable up there.” Theseus obeyed immediately, awkwardly struggling to get his legs beneath him, but managing all the same. Phil followed him.

-

Tommy thought his father, in all of his regalia in the throne room, was scary (and prime, he was), but King Philza, even dressed in his daily clothes, even in a room as casual as the library managed to get Tommy’s heart pumping with fear.

He tried.

He hadn’t been expecting Philza, because why the heck would the king approach Tommy? He had been expecting Techno or Wilbur, who he had gotten embarrassingly close with. Not Philza, not the fucking Angel of Death.

Instead, he’d managed to disrespect the king in about .2 seconds. He tried to make up for it, but bowing hardly worked in his father’s court, much less with a man who had no reason to forgive Tommy.

Tommy wasn’t sure what punishment would be like here, because neither Wilbur nor Technoblade had seen fit to push him yet. Surely though, an insult to the king would be worth punishing, even if King Philza himself didn’t have time to attend to it. Surely, Wilbur and Techno, who had been so nice to him so far would hear of this and grow to hate him.

Or else Dream would declare war and all of this would be a moot point, because Tommy would be dead.

"I had meant to ask you before, but I wanted to give you time to adjust to the Empire," Phil started, "which I hope is going well? I know that Wilbur and Techno have been trying to help, but it can still be a difficult process. Is there anything you need?" King Philza was still being so gentle, it was absurd. His father, Dream, would never be like this, not even to Tubbo or Ranboo while he was in one of his states. This behavior was unprecedented, although, Tommy supposed, Phil was a king and could act however he wanted to.

"Wi-Prince Wilbur," Tommy quickly corrected himself, "and Prince Technoblade have been very helpful. I'm very thankful for their efforts." Hopefully, that made him sound grateful enough. Dream had a complex about Tommy being "grateful". Tommy didn't have that much experience with kings, all things granted, but he was pretty sure they usually wanted people to be grateful for the things they did for them.

"I'm glad everything's going well," King Philza said, "I know I haven't been around much, but with the whole process slowing down, I should be around to help more, should you need it." Well, that was a terrifying concept. The king of the empire wanted to watch him. Lovely.

"I'm sorry I didn't get it sorted sooner, but once again, adjustment and all that. I'm sure you aren't going to be thrilled about it, but I really do need to get you under a tutor, before your father accuses me of neglecting your education." Oh yeah, Tommy had forgotten about the whole education thing while he was busy. It had been a while, since he had been on the road.

Apparently, King Philza just wanted to give him adjustment time or whatever the heck that meant. He wouldn't voice those feelings out loud, because screw that, but it was just as true.

"So what would you prefer? I could try to get a tutor from your home, even your old one if they're available, or I can get you one from here. I happen to know a few that worked well with Techno and Wil. Do you have a preference?"

"I don't-" Tommy took a deep breath and reminded himself that he was talking to a king, and he had to be respectful about this. God, Tommy hated formality. He was going to be trapped in it for a while now though, so he might as well resign himself to it. "My father did not wish

to send anyone along with me, and I am not allowed to have anyone from home, according to his order. My apologies if this goes against your wishes, but I cannot go against my father. I accept whatever punishment you deem suitable.”

Tommy bowed his head. That was what Dream would have wanted to hear, and at their cores, he doubted that King Philza and Dream were really that different in their expectations of obedience.

“Theseus-mate, that isn’t even your fault, I’m not going to-” The king seemed unable to finish his sentence and Tommy forced himself to sit still and not fidget awkwardly. “You aren’t getting punished for that,” the king eventually settled on, “If it’s off the table, I will simply get a teacher locally. We can-I’ll try Tech and Wil’s and then, if that doesn’t work out well,” Philza smiled, “I have all the options in the world. Almost.”

“Of course, your highness,” Tommy said, not knowing what else to say but knowing that not responding was inexcusable.

“Now,” Philza said, “onto more interesting matters. I know that there’s a pretty extreme temperature change between the SMP and the Antarctic, and I wanted to make sure that you had suitable clothing.” The fuck. “Wilbur said that he wanted to get you some, and I think? He talked to you, but it’s Wilbur so ...” Philza trailed off for a moment. “Would you be okay with that? If you don’t want to shop, I could have the tailors do the clothing, but I thought you might like getting out of the castle.”

Fuck. Tommy would really love getting out of the castle.

“That sounds nice,” Tommy said carefully, “If that is acceptable, then yes. I think I’d, yes please, King Philza.” Philza smiled.

“Alright then,” Philza said, “And while we aren’t in court or something like that, you can just call me Phil, I don’t mind. Heck, my own kids do sometimes. You’re welcome to get back to your letter, thank you for letting me chat with you.”

And then King Philza left and Tommy felt like he had just had a fever dream from how confusing that conversation had been. Why was King Philza so insistent on being informal. Why were all of the royalty in the Empire so odd? He couldn't call them odd, but screw it, they were really odd. Was he missing a cultural link? Why were they like this?

Their rules weren't the same. Tommy hadn't even managed to figure out what the rules were, what the punishments here were, if they were still in some weird honeymoon stage, or if they just didn't care enough to spend the time around him in order to punish him (although that was all Dream had ever been around him for. Tommy was a bad kid, making a literal king waste time on him because he was a fuck up instead of dealing with his problems himself).

Either way, Tommy forced the conversation with the king out of his head in favor of focusing on finishing his letter to Tubbo. He still had to write one to Ranboo, and he was going to write them individually, because it made Tommy feel less lonely and his brothers deserved to be addressed individually.

It was weird, because Tommy wasn't usually this soft at home, but being away from them made him so fucking soft, and all he wanted to do was talk to them and cling to them and heck he called Tubbo the clingy one, but here he was. Clinging.

If only he wasn't forever away.

Tommy was just finishing, putting his seal on the letter as Wilbur came literally skittering into the room. What the fuck, he was a prince, why didn't he have any fucking manners.

"Phil said I could take you shopping," Wilbur said excitedly, "Can I take you shopping?" Tommy wasn't sure why the fuck. Wilbur was so excited about it, but he wasn't about to deny him.

Also, Tommy really did need more warm clothes, and Wilbur, for all that Tommy had to watch himself around the man, was fun. For an old person.

"Yes?" Tommy said, sitting up, "I just have to tuck this away." Wilbur gave him a moment and then in a flurry, Tommy was wrapped in a warm cloak and herded out. Tommy was led around the outer halls of the castle, and finally, out of the gate. Other than in the courtyards, Tommy hadn't been outside of the castle. He was fairly certain that he wasn't allowed to be

outside of the castle, and also fairly certain that Wilbur was supposed to have guards with him or something.

The crown prince just wandering around the town seemed kind of like a dangerous thing to happen. Tempting fate and assassins a little too much for Tommy's taste.

But Wilbur had dawned more muted clothing, not so common that he would be looked at oddly in fancier shops, but they certainly didn't scream royalty.

Tommy's clothes, while hardly visible under the fucking cloak that Wilbur had tossed over him definitely would stand out. They weren't overtly SMP, though their style certainly wasn't from the Antarctic Empire.

But they weren't very nice. Tommy had kind of been wearing his trash clothes around the castle because the only people that saw him were servants that didn't really seem to care about what Tommy was doing as long as he wasn't destroying stuff because why would they and Wilbur. And Wilbur cared about a lot of things, but not really what Tommy was wearing.

And Technoblade? Techno was still keeping his distance from Tommy. He wasn't sure what he had done, but it wasn't like he could approach the other prince first.

Tommy got a few weird looks in the first shop, but Wil, with all of the confidence of someone who would one day own the land the shop stood on, ignored the shopkeeper.

"You need more coats," Wilbur said, "or else you are going to freeze. And the owner of this place is kind of a bitch, but their coats are top of the line, so we're just going to settle for buying from him. Look, how do you feel about this one?" Wilbur handed Tommy a coat, and Tommy weighed between sharing his honest opinion and trying to guess what exactly Wilbur expected him to say.

He continued with that game, for a while, even after they left the store with the bitch of a shopkeeper.

Finally, Tommy opened his mouth about something. It was a greenish blue sweater with some text on it, although Tommy paid less attention to the text and more attention to the fact that it would look so fucking ugly on him. He said as much to Wilbur, to which Wilbur made him try it on.

“See, you don’t look like shit,” Wilbur said encouragingly, “It looks good on you.” Tommy didn’t want to admit it, but he had been wrong and the sweater was really comfortable. It wasn’t fancy by any means, but it got added to Tommy’s slowly growing collection of clothes that he wouldn’t freeze to death in.

“Wilbur,” Tommy said, because now that they were in public, Tommy definitely couldn’t call him Prince, and Wilbur, conniving, slippery Wilbur, could only really call him Tommy. Theseus was much too distinct. “Wilbur, I think that I have enough clothing now. Thank you, but I think this is enough.” Wilbur looked at Tommy slightly disappointedly, but sighed.

“Fine,” Wilbur said, “Of course, if you are ever running out ...” Tommy gave Wilbur a harrowing look. “Fine. Fine, sure, freeze to death if you run out of clothes, whatever.”

“I’ll just steal yours,” Tommy said, hoping that that wasn’t too familiar. He really didn’t want to piss off the prince, but Wilbur had been so friendly and nice, and he wanted someone who he could feel at home with even though he didn’t really deserve it after everything everyone else had had to sacrifice, Tommy should be able to sacrifice something himself.

“You absolute gremlin,” Wil said, an almost fond tone in his voice, “Come on then, we can see some sights on our way back to the castle. And we might have to sneak back, because I may or may not have made an unofficial outing and not let anyone know. And there may be a fifty-fifty chance of my father finding out and freaking out and sending people after me because he thinks I’ve been kidnapped.”

Tommy gave Wilbur an unimpressed look.

“Hey, he did say we could go shopping! I wanted to be able to wander freely,” Wilbur said, “the guards would have stopped me, Tommy. Tommy it would have been no fun, surely you understand.”

“Why would the guards care what you’re doing, mine never did,” Tommy said, “I could have set up a drug trade, and as long as I wasn’t getting my ass kicked by an assassin, they wouldn’t have done anything.”

“Then you had shit guards,” Wilbur said, “mine would throw a fit if I set up a drug empire.”

“We should do that,” Tommy said, “Avoid going back to the castle and risking everyone getting mad at us and become famous drug men.”

“Drug men?”

“Shut up, Wilbur,” Tommy said, “It’s a brilliant idea.”

“It is,” Wilbur said, “Definitely child.” Wilbur and Tommy continued their joke for a moment, and Tommy was thankful. It gave him a moment's reprieve from the fact that Tommy couldn't just run off and do as he pleased. If Tommy left, it meant that two countries would go to war. If Tommy left, it meant that so many innocent people would die.

“Shh,” Wilbur hushed as they entered the castle through one of the lesser traveled entrances.

“I don’t think that being quiet will help us much, Wil,” Tommy said, “They’re going to know we left.”

“Not necessarily,” Wilbur said, “what if we were just playing really competitive hide and seek.” Tommy stared at him doubtfully.

“What if the twenty something year old crown prince of the Antarctic Empire was just playing really competitive hide and seek with a hostage prince from the SMP?”

“Well, we aren’t going to phrase it like that, idiot. What? Would you rather I tell them we were starting a drug trade?”

“Without me?” a voice said from down the hallway further. Shit, they should have been looking out.

Technoblade, looking less intimidating than Tommy had ever seen him, stood in the hallway. He looked pale and tired, and his hair was down instead of up in a braid.

“Techno,” Wil said, “we would have invited you. Eventually. What would we do without your fighting prowess? You could get rid of all the governments for us.” Techno snorted.

“Ah yes,” Techno said, “The voices would fucking like that, at least.” Wilbur made a sympathetic noise.

“Have they been bad?” Wilbur said, as if what Techno just said made sense, “Is that why ...”

“Yeah.” Techno shrugged. “You know how they are, not much I can do. Sorry.”

Tommy, who had already fallen silent, tried to blend into the background. He wasn’t sure what the two siblings were talking about, but it had nothing to do with him. He was just lurking awkwardly on their family matters at the moment.

“And sorry Tommy,” Techno said, “I meant to spend more time with you once we got here, but well ... I’m sure you’ve heard.”

“Heard?” Tommy found himself asking, “of what.”

Both princes stared at Tommy, apparently at a loss. Great. So Tommy didn't know something that he was definitely supposed to know. Fuck. He was so stupid. They probably already thought he was an idiot, but now he was just so clearly dumb. Uh. He tried to think through all of the stuff that he had learned about the Antarctic empire for diplomacy, but

nothing stuck out. He should have spent his last bit at home studying up on the Antarctic empire instead of saying goodbye to his brothers.

(that wasn't true, tommy wasn't sure that he would have survived if he hadn't been allowed to say goodbye to his brothers)

"You don't ... know." Wilbur said carefully. Oh god, this was going to be the point where they ran out of patience for Tommy. This was going to be where the honeymoon period ended and everyone decided they irrevocably just hated Tommy. And Tommy couldn't even blame them for it, because he was an abject failure and his father would do the same thing. Punish him.

He just had to listen. He just had to obey.

"I do not," Tommy said, "I'm sorry." And Tommy couldn't hear Wilbur's assurances of "it's okay" "there's nothing to be sorry for" and "sorry we assumed", all he could hear was Techno's sigh.

"Tommy," Techno said, "could you come here?" Robotically, Tommy walked away from Wilbur's side, away from safety (but Tommy didn't deserve to be safe, Dream wouldn't have sent him here if he did), and towards Techno.

Techno was talking, but all Tommy could hear was Dream calling him over and-

Dream was very specific with his punishments, and Tommy most often, made specific mistakes. He was selfish and wasteful. He wasn't useful. He messed up too much on tutoring assignments, and Dream, despite being the busy king he was and father to two other children, sometimes took the time out of his day to correct Tommy.

Hitting was pretty common, pretty tame and fitting when Tommy thought about it. A beating was just a step more, and hardly a big deal (it shouldn't have been a big deal to Tommy, but Ranboo and Tubbo cared far too much about it). For more serious offenses, for wasting items and such, Dream would ... destroy Tommy's things. Obviously, he couldn't dirty the castle, but he could use them to light fires (they were running out of supplies and heating the castle

was a struggle, so the least Tommy could do was let his punishment be of some value, right?). And Tommy ... deserved it.

He didn't have anything on him to offer, all he knew was someone was standing in front of him and he was pretty sure that he had angered them, and Tommy didn't have anything to give to them.

All he could do was wait for a punch or a kick or for them to demand something that he couldn't give them.

"I don't have anything, Sir," Tommy said, because it was the truth and he couldn't ... he should have gotten something, Dream was going to kill him. Tommy was going to die because he didn't have anything on him, this was so stupid, he was so stupid. "I can't-I don't have anything on me to burn, but I won't fight, I promise, if-"

"What?" the person in front of him said, who didn't really sound like Dream. Oh. This was someone else. Of course they didn't understand. What was their preferred way of punishment? How could Tommy assure them that he would learn his lesson? How?

Tommy shook.

"Tommy," the person told him, "you aren't-I don't know where you think you are, but at the moment, you are in the hallway of the Antarctic Empire's castle. I'm Technoblade, Wilbur is right beside you. You aren't in trouble." Tommy took a sharp breath. Antarctic Empire, Techno, fuck.

Tommy blinked his eyes and tried to clear his mind. Well, he screwed that one up didn't he.

"I'm sorry," Tommy said, "I'm so sorry."

"Tommy," Technoblade asked, "Tommy please look at me." Tommy did as he was asked, looking just below Techno's eyes.

He wasn't stupid. He wasn't going to make eye contact.

"Are you with us?" Wilbur asked, and yeah, he probably thought Tommy was still where he went every time his eyes went foggy (except Tommy didn't have a reason to do it, he was just a dumbass.)

"I'm here," Tommy said hesitantly, "Sorry. Sorry, I'm here."

"It's alright, Toms," Wilbur said, voice incredibly different from his previously teasing tone, "You have nothing to worry about."

"I'm sorry."

"Shh," Technoblade said, "I'm not going to hurt you. You haven't done anything wrong." Tommy stayed frozen, waiting for Techno to move, decide what he wanted him to do. Techno wasn't Dream, and while that may be a good thing, Tommy at least knew Dream. Tommy wasn't sure how Technoblade would treat this situation. Or Wilbur.

"Should we get dad," Wilbur whispered to Techno, probably hoping that Tommy wouldn't be able to hear him. Fuck, Tommy shouldn't be able to hear him. Screw this. Screw everything. This was stupid. Tommy was stupid.

"Does he trust Philza?" Does Tommy trust Philza? Fucking no, but he isn't going to fight any of them on it. He isn't going to fight anything, none of whatever punishment it was that they did in the royal family here.

"No," Wilbur said, "but I don't know what to do."

"It's okay," Tommy said, "Whatever you-whatever you want." Tommy wouldn't stop them. Tommy couldn't stop them.

And he ... he trusted. Wilbur. A little bit. Enough.

“Tommy, no-I just want you to be comfortable.”

“I trust you,” Tommy said, “It’s-whatever you think is best.” Tommy wasn’t sure what problem they were trying to solve(he was pretty sure it was him), but Tommy would go along with it.

“Okay then,” Technoblade said, “Alright, let’s ... let’s go find Phil.”

Chapter End Notes

hello! i hope i have given enough fluff and angst, because it kinda gets worse. for context, the next chapter is like 11k words or something unedited, and I'm kind of afraid of it lol

(nonsense? typos? in my wonky update? oops lol)

...

Chapter Summary

Phil ends his denial arc and then starts some other arc entirely. everyone has a rough time. and when i say everyone i mean *everyone*. in the whole freaking story.

Oh, and misunderstandings. because that is all that I write.

Chapter Notes

I don't know how long it's been since my last update, but I know it's been awhile, so sorry about that. This chapter was also a monster, sitting at above 10k words. I don't know why I originally wrote it like that, but it was awful.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy let himself be led down the halls that were actually getting kind of familiar now. Not in the same way that the halls at home were, because Tommy knew the halls of the castle in the SMP like the back of his hand. They were home, and even if Tommy was separated from it forever, he'd probably never forget it.

Tommy was familiar with the family wing of the Antarctic castle, but he had never gone this way before.

It was to the king's personal quarters. As far as Tommy knew, Wilbur and Techno both wandered over into Phil's quarters often, but Tommy wasn't supposed to be there. It was never explicitly stated-few things were. However, it didn't take a genius to realize he wouldn't be welcome in the personal space of the Empire's king.

Tommy was actually trembling more now, oh boy wasn't that fun. He had only really spoken to the king a few times. Once when Tommy first arrived, and then they were meeting officially for the sake of peace. It wasn't really a good track record, seeing as the last conversation they'd had (and every one after) was very awkward, and Tommy probably screwed it up.

Now the king's sons were making him go to him to what-calm him Tommy down? Punish him? Either of those were just as likely in Tommy's mind.

Still, Tommy couldn't bring himself to think that Wilbur had entirely negative intentions, not after everything he'd done.

"Wilbur," Tommy said, "What is-what is the king going to do?" In response, Wilbur scooped Tommy up like Tommy was a fucking toddler and into his side.

"I knew this was a mistake," Techno said, although his voice sounded very far off. The only thing that Tommy could really hear well was Wilbur's heartbeat.

"He's going to help," Wilbur said, "He's just going to help, you can relax. Just pretend he's my dad, yeah? Pretend that he's just one of your friends' dads, okay? That's all he is." Tommy didn't tell Wilbur that even when he had friends, he'd certainly never met their friends. "Your twenty six year old friend's dad, does that make sense?" The joke wasn't honestly that very funny, but Tommy laughed anyway, because maybe if he did he could pretend he was relaxed.

"Yup, just normal things," Techno said, "Just going to meet an old man, nothing special."

"Techno what the fuck did you just say about me?" a voice from inside the door asked. Heck. Philza. King Philza. Who it sounded like Techno had just pissed off. And Phil wasn't going to take it out on Techno, he was going to take it out on Tommy, because he was there and he was available and he was the least important person here ...

"Phil, the child."

"What?" A door opened. Tommy tucked himself away into Wilbur, who gracefully draped part of his cloak around him.

“The child. Needs help. And we're having trouble so ...”

“Of course,” the king, the ruler of the Antarctic Empire, the Angel of Death said, “Come here, mate. We’re going to be okay.” and then he was swept away into the Angel’s nest. Literally. He wasn’t expecting the spread of blankets and pillows in the middle of the room, but then again, he wasn’t really sure what he had been expecting exactly.

“Let’s get settled down,” King Philza said, and his two kids, despite being well into adulthood, obeyed, nestling into the nest like they were much younger than they were, and ever so carefully, ever so cautiously, they swirled around Tommy. He felt light. Like he wasn’t really there.

“I’m sorry,” Tommy said, once again, because he wasn’t sure what else he should be saying, “I didn’t mean to.” He let silence envelop him for a moment. “I don’t know what I did.”

“Nothing Tommy,” Wilbur said, “Besides that was entirely my fault.” There was a soft twack, and then Wilbur was encased in large wings, to which he immediately began kicking up a fuss, although he didn’t struggle at all.

“You almost gave me a heart attack,” Philza said, “deal with it.”

“Old man,” Wilbur said. There was a bit more bickering. Tommy let himself sink away. When he came back, he felt warm and soft, and goopy inside. There were soft things swirled around him, and the lighting was dim, but not uncomfortably so. It was as if someone had put everything that made a room comfortable in it and mixed them all together.

It was heaven.

It was hell.

What did Tommy do again?

Besides him, Technoblade-Prince Technoblade, the fucking blood god, the *Blade*- was sleeping peacefully, as was Wilbur and the king?

Philza was watching. He seemed to realize that Tommy was awake at the same time that Tommy realized he was being watched.

“Hello,” Philza said, “are you back? You looked like you needed a bit of a rest there.”

“I’m here,” Tommy said grogily, “I’m here.”

“Do you mind telling me what happened there?” Phil asked. Tommy waited to see if he would elaborate at all, but he didn’t. What did Phil mean? What happened just now? What happened while he and Wilbur were in town? Did he mean most recently? Probably?

“What happened, uh, where. Sir,” Tommy tacked on, because the worst thing with Dream was when he would increase punishments due to a lack of respect.

Hopefully he didn’t think that TOMmy was being too obtuse because Tommy, genuinely, did not mean to be. He just really. Didn’t understand what was going on. And hopefully that didn’t make him screw it up more.

“Ah.” King Philza was silent for a moment. “When you and Wilbur got home. Is that when this started?” Was Philza being ... vague on purpose? Did he want Tommy to incriminate himself? And so what if he did, that was perfectly within his rights. Tommy shouldn’t-as much as he wanted to, he deserved this. He shouldn’t fight back.

“Wilbur took me out shopping,” Tommy said, “And since we um, snuck out? We went in the back entrance, and Technoblade found me-us. It freaked me out, I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.” Was he being repetitive?

Phil still hadn’t said anything.

“I see,” Phil finally said, which was just, not a comforting answer in the slightest. “It’s alright, Tommy. It wasn’t your fault. I just want to make sure you don’t have to go through that again. Do you have any ... triggers that we should avoiding?” Genuinely, Tommy didn’t even know what that meant.

Seriously, was Phil just trying really hard to trip him up? Because the king didn’t have to try that hard, Tommy was very easy to trip up.

“I don’t know what that means,” Tommy said, figuring that honestly would probably be the best for this situation. At least, maybe it would make the situation less frustrating for Philza (it didn’t look like it was working though).

“Oh, Sorry mate. I just meant whatever caused the panic. I probably should have been more specific” Oh, Philza was assuming that there was something wrong with him, but there *wasn’t*.

What Phil was describing sounded like Ranboo more than Tommy. Ranboo, Tommy knew, had trauma in his past, as did Tubbo, although it manifested differently in both of them. Ranboo had anxiety or some shit, and preferred to keep his face covered more often than not. Ranboo had panic attacks sometimes, Tommy was pretty sure, but those were different because *ranboo had actual trauma* and actual reasons, even if the thing that “caused” it was as simple as a noise.

Whatever. Point was, that Tommy wasn’t like Ranboo, he didn’t have a reason, and he wasn’t being triggered into his behavior, he was just stupid and pathetic.

“It’s not like that,” Tommy said, before the fear of correcting the king could get to him, “I’m not-I just can’t control myself. I don’t like getting punished. I don’t have a reason or anything, I’m just a bitch.” The king, for how rude that statement had been, seemed to just be taking it into account.

“See Tommy,” Philza, “You might think that, but I don’t think it’s true. I’m not a professional by any means , but I think there’s something going on there, okay? It’s perfectly alright if you don’t know what, we just wanted to make you more comfortable. But it’s okay,

alright? That was it. Bit scary conversation over. You can go back to sleep, if you'd like. My boys won't be up in forever, and I'm rather tired myself."

It wasn't phrased like an order, but Tommy wasn't stupid, and he knew a command when he heard one. He wasn't sure why Phil was pushing the punishment off for later (maybe because he was tired? That was so fucking valid of him).

Either way, Tommy didn't have to worry about it right now. Right now, the only thing that he had been told to do was sleep. Surrounded by a vast array of blankets, in the heart of the Angel's nest, Tommy passed out.

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"Aww, Techno look at him," Wilbur said, "He's finally relaxed." Tommy didn't relax, not really, not even when he was having fun and laughing with Wilbur, there was always something behind his eyes.

Techno grunted sleepily, looking over Tommy.

It had been ... rough. This past while with Tommy. He had been understandably on guard and terrified. Wilbur probably would be too, if he had been seventeen and in a new, possibly hostile place.

"What happened?" Phil asked quietly, eyes ghosting over the frame of the boy as he wrapped his arms around closer. "He ... tried to explain, but ..."

"He had a panic attack," Techno said, "Either thought I was someone else or thought that I would ... hurt him.

"He thought you were his dad," Wilbur filled in, "He thought Techno was Dream, and he thought Techno was going to hurt him."

“Wilbur, that’s a huge accusation,” Phil said. Wilbur shrugged.

“Who else could touch a prince?”

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The first day without Tommy felt almost normal, but everything also felt entirely wrong. It wasn’t like Ranboo was with Tommy every waking moment, but even alone, the gaping wound of Tommy’s absence was there.

The silence left over breakfast as neither Ranboo nor Tubbo could open their mouths from grief (because they weren’t going to see Tommy again, *prime* their younger brother was gone just like that, it only took one decree of their father, from Dream, and Ranboo’s only younger brother was *gone*). Ranboo hadn’t really spoken since Tommy left and Tubbo ... in private, Tubbo hadn't stopped talking.

Tubbo had plans, and for plausible deniability, Ranboo did now know what those plans were. Whether or not his brother was telling the truth, or just saying what he wished he could do, Ranboo didn’t know. Either way, it wouldn't bring Tommy back.

The two siblings weren’t divided so much as they were scheming in opposite directions (if Tubbo went down with Dream, then someone would have to lead the country, and wasn’t Ranboo such a convenient candidate? Not that Ranboo could stand losing another sibling.)

A week into Tommy being gone. It was horrible to think that he might not even be out of the country, might not even be out of Ranboo’s reach, and yet ...

Yet Ranboo was eating breakfast in silence with Tubbo, and Tommy was in a carriage across the country, and getting farther from them every moment.

Tubbo was stubborn for the first two weeks. Stubborn in his belief that he could do something.

Dream had beat it into Ranboo's head that he couldn't. Ranboo, unlike Tubbo, was instantly recognizable. He was an abomination from the End, a hybrid, not quite human, but certainly not welcome in the end if his expulsion as a child said anything. Of course, Dream was the one to tell him that story, to say that he saved Ranboo, that he was Ranboo's *friend* if only Ranboo would listen to him. Even now, he waxed on and on about how lucky Ranboo was that Tommy was more useless than he, that Tommy had gotten sent away instead of Ranboo because, after all, the snow of the Antarctic Empire wouldn't really agree with Ranboo's skin.

Ranboo was used to Dream's thinly veiled threats.

Finally, sixteen days after Tommy had been taken from them, Tubbo broke down.

"Ranboo," Tubbo said, from the comfort of Ranboo's bedroom, where the two boys were alone. (There was a guard outside Ranboo's room, and two more to escort Tubbo). As long as they didn't speak too loudly, they were alone. They had privacy.

Dream monitored their every move otherwise, with guards and servants and everyone else.

"Ranboo, I don't think we're going to see Tommy again," Tubbo said, breaking down, "I-he's gone.

Prime it shouldn't hurt so much, especially since Ranboo knew that. He knew that Tommy was gone and that the chances of ever seeing his younger brother ever again were so thin they were non-existent (unless the empire turned out to be far, far kinder than their description and rumors said they were. And while rumors were rarely true, at least entirely, you could not make up wars on a whim, it was not so easy. And any man that would accept his brother being torn away from home as a ransom and precaution to keep war away, was not a good man. So even if every book and person that Ranboo had talked about King Philza about was wrong, he still hated the man.

A good man would not have taken his brother. A good man would not be threatening the SMP.

Philza of the Antarctic was not a good man. And his sons, well, the rumors didn't take them too kindly either (Ranboo knew the rumors of himself, and he shuddered to think of what they told about him in other countries, but at least Ranboo wasn't in league with a brother stealing king, right?)

Ranboo, if he ever met them, would destroy them.

Actually, he was pretty sure that he had met at least once of the princes a while back, when he was very young, but all he could really remember was Tubbo yelling at them over Tommy which actually ... yeah, that tracked.

Ranboo would like to yell at them about Tommy.

He hoped, at very least, they were treating Tommy well. Maybe even better than Dream treated him at home. Dream was worse to Tommy than he was to Ranboo and Dream was not kind to Ranboo. Dream liked Ranboo just a little more, because he was rare, because of what he was and what he could do for the man, but there was no real advantage to Dream liking you other than the man might not send you to foreign countries as a token, apparently.

"He's gone, Tubs," Ranboo said eventually, "He's Dream, you know, dad just. There's nothing we can do. I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry," Tubbo said, "I'm going to fucking kill Dream, and then the Empire, war and consequences be damned. I don't care."

That wasn't ... strictly speaking that wasn't true. Tubbo cared very much about the country, because he forced himself to learn all about court and how to be a good king even apart from Dream's lessons in it. Even apart from Dream's desires for his oldest son.

"I met Tommy before I met Dream," Tubbo said, "Did you know that?" Ranboo did, of course he did, these were his brothers. Instead of responding, Ranboo let Tubbo carry on. He didn't mind hearing the story again, especially now, especially not if it was about Tommy. "Tommy is at least two years younger than me, but we don't know for sure because no one knows his birthday. They just kind of ... guessed when they made him a prince." Tubbo laughed, a slightly forced sound with a little bit of genuine humor. Ranboo cradled the

genuine humor, because with the way things were going he wasn't likely to get much of it, and Tubbo was all he had now. And Ranboo was all that Tubbo had now too. Fuck.

"Yeah," Tubbo said, "They're kind of idiots. Just making up a national holiday like that. I don't know what Dream was ever thinking anyway, taking us all in. I know he wanted successors. I know, at least that's what the public has said, but it's not like dad himself has ever told me anything." Tubbo was quiet for a moment. "He never tells us anything." Ranboo agreed. Because it was treason, what he and Tubbo were doing, and Dream would not hesitate to hurt them, to punish them, to lock them away (Or worse, with Ranboo, Dream could do so much worse)

"Anyways," Tubbo continued, "clearly he's just unreasonable, so there's no point in trying to figure out his motives. Whatever is going on in his head isn't anything that I want to touch. But yeah. Me and Tommy met on the streets of this city. He'd always lived here, I think. I-I was found in a box."

"And I came through an inter-world portal," Ranboo added, because he wasn't exactly fucking wrong. Tubbo let out a small snort, and Ranboo felt just a little better, knowing that he had made Tubbo feel a little better.

"Yeah," Tubbo said.

Silence fell between the two princes. They fell asleep, though a guard came in the check when they had fallen silent, they had only fallen asleep.

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The castle was not asleep.

Outside of the prince's room, two of the guards bogged down with nightshift were quietly talking, joking between the two of them. They made sure to keep a lookout, but guard duty was so boring, especially since the only thing the two princes really did was sleep at night (Although, they were there, not just in case of assassins, but well ... Prince Ranboo had some peculiar sleepwalking habits that someone had to corral.)

(the kid got sharper teeth at night, and his words were unintelligible. But still, they got paid and maybe someday they'd be able to shove the nightshift onto other poor sobs.)

In the kitchen, a few cooks were cleaning and prepping for the morning meal. They would sleep, but not quite yet. The kitchen was warm, after all, and it was getting harder to heat their homes.

Two more guards, not much older than the other two, had just finished escorting an esteemed, but unintroduced guest to the king's study. They waited outside. They heard nothing, at least that was what they would say to anyone who asked, up to and including the king.

The knowledge was not worth losing their heads.

Dream was tired.

He was so fucking tired, and if he had to hear one of his sons moping about Tommy one. More. Tme. He was going to order the execution of someone.

Not actually. Probably. That was a hassle, and he'd either have to find a prisoner or fabricate something to avoid the public's scrutiny.

Dream was tired.

"Dream," his general, George, told him, "You are not going to be able to manage another war. You know I cannot spare anyone from the warfront in the badlands. Sapnap cannot be spared, and neither can any of his soldiers."

Dream had called George back in a moment of weakness. He needed advice, needed someone on his fucking side if his sons were going to be brats.

“There would be no need,” Dream insisted, “George, I trust you. And you know if I ever ... without any of my sons of age, you know this country would be yours. But the time is right to attack the Empire. They are weak.”

“But they’d kill Tommy,” George said, “Philza isn’t known for his mercy, is he.” Dream sighed, because he had to pretend like Tommy was a problem around George. George and Sapnap were brilliant, but they both still struggled with attachments. Tommy was a sacrifice, nothing more than a plot to lower the guard of the Empire now. Whatever hopes Dream held for him in the past were dead. Hopefully, if he was useful, it would actually work.

Either way, Tommy would be dead. But Tommy wasn’t even the fucking point, and no one could see it. Tommy was nothing before Dream picked him up anyway, and he’d always be nothing without Dream. Now that Tommy was alone, he shouldn’t matter anymore, but people kept getting so hung up on him.

Maybe Dream had made a mistake when he took him with in with Tubbo and Ranboo. Maybe Tommy had ruined both of them.

“Right,” Dream said, as if George was right.

“I know they’re a threat,” George said, “But they have your son right now. Remember.” Dream nodded and talked to George more, more about stuff that wasn’t fucking politics for once before the man left, going to sleep for a while before he departed for the battlefield once more in the morning.

Dream remembered. And it was going to be such a fun war.

Dream laid his plans carefully. His best generals were busy, and wouldn’t fight for him here. George and Sapnap didn’t get it yet anyways. The two were too attached to work properly, but they’d learn. Dream knew that they could learn.

Instead, Dream had to find someone else to carry out his plans. Documents cluttered his usually clean library, studies and treaties and plans.

He ignored most of it, it was drivel and nothing more.

One of the letters had the royal seal on it, but stationary from the Antarctic Empire. Huh. interesting. Tommy sent a letter.

It was voluntary, probably. Dream couldn't imagine why the Empire would care to make sure Tommy wrote home, like a little soldier on the battlefield instead of a political prisoner. That was all Tommy was, after all, a cute little thing that Dream could use as he saw fit. Now, Dream guessed, the Empire could use him as they saw fit. Tommy had been his but Dream had cashed him in for better things. The empire could have him for as long as it took them to realize that Tommy was absolutely useless.

God, this was going to be fun. This was going to be so much fun.

"Dream," Punz said, with none of the respect due to a man of Dream's ranking (He was the king of a world superpower, and Punz was no one. He wouldn't be able to do his job if he were).

"Dream, you had a proposition for me?" Despite the utter lack of respect, Dream smiled. Punz was exactly the kind of person Dream needed. They would be perfect for the plan, as long as Dream provided him with the perfect escape plan.

The rest of the castle slept, but a king, a mercenary, and a boy two guards had been told to turn a blind eye towards tonight.

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Tommy was asleep when it happened, and the assassin never stepped in his room, so the only way he knew was when the thump of boots woke him up. They were heavy, and thudding down the halls and Tommy knew he had been dreaming (a nightmare) but he wasn't sure of what.

All he knew was that there was commotion in the hallway. All he knew was that there were guards in the hallway and he didn't know what was happening.

All Tommy knew was that he was awake and so was everyone else.

He wanted to leave his room and wanted to stay in there all of the same. It was warm and cozy, and so much better than what the royal family could have given him. It was *safe*. They had given Tommy a safe place, when they really didn't need to.

Tommy brushed the blankets off of himself and sat up. It was a little chillier, but Tommy let the air hit him anyways.

What was going on? The only time when this happened at home was when ... but surely not. Surely not. There was no way-there couldn't be a way.

Tommy didn't want this.

He didn't want this. But nobody would have except an assassin and whoever sent them.

Tommy hoped no one was dead. He hoped that those guards were just precautions. He hoped that he was entirely wrong.

The door to his room was swung open, and in the doorway stood two guards.

"Prince Theseus," one of them said, "Prince Theseus, I'm going to need you to come with us."

Tommy didn't ask them what was going on. Tommy didn't ask why they needed him. Tommy didn't do anything except stand up to follow them.

“You may get changed,” one of them said, “we will probably-you will probably want to- ” The guard couldn’t seem to find the words to use, but Tommy got the gist of what he said. Quietly, Tommy changed his clothing, into something easier to go around in.

His sleep clothes were very comfortable, but Tommy didn’t know what was happening. And the last thing he wanted to do was to be caught in them while something important was going on.

“Are you ready?” The guard asked. Tommy nodded and fell between them. They weren’t guarding him like they were protecting him, they were guarding him like ... like he was. Like he was a prisoner, even though Tommy didn’t have any chains on. Oh fuck.

Fucking hell, what had happened.

Tommy tried his best not to shake, though he wasn’t very effective. If the guards noticed, they said nothing, which Tommy was very grateful for. They didn’t have to be kind, not when they were guarding him like this. They had no reason. If they were commanded to watch him, they didn’t have to be nice about it, but they were.

“It will be okay,” one of Tommy’s guards told him, “it’s okay. You’re not in trouble.”

“Not specifically,” the other guard added, which really didn’t help Tommy’s mental state. Tommy doubted anything was going to help his mental state. He was terrified already. He didn’t know what was going on. He was confused and still sleepy and alone.

And something bad had happened, and for some reason, it made someone order him into custody, as if he were dangerous.

“It’s okay,” the guard repeated, probably when he heard Tommy’s breath pick up. Tommy did his best to regulate his own breathing, but it was hard and he was so scared, and he didn’t know what was happening.

It wasn't okay.

The halls were changing, and Tommy didn't know where they were going. He had never been to this side of the castle before, although he hadn't explored the castle very well. Tommy wasn't sure how much he was allowed to explore, although according to Wilbur, he could get anywhere. But Wilbur was too kind, and obviously he didn't really seem to know about the whole "this child is a hostage that you might fucking kill, maybe don't get attached." If Wilbur got attached to Tommy, they clearly had too much faith in Tommy's father.

Dream didn't give a fuck about Tommy. He cared about his brothers, in some capacity (Though not as people. There was no way that fucker cared about Ranboo or Tubbo on a personal level. He might not even really know them on a personal level, because he was fucking stupid.)

Eventually the guards stopped him, just in the hallway. Tommy wasn't quite sure where they were, but it looked like a medical ward.

"The King has requested your presence," one of the guards said, "He's currently in the medical wing with his son. Should you do anything, we will be here to stop you." What had fucking happened. Tommy nodded. He was scared, and when he was scared of Dream, he knew that he needed to be quiet and good and do as he said and maybe it wouldn't hurt as much.

"Here is the room," one of the guards said, then to the other guard, "Will you go in and see if he is ready?"

The other guard stepped in and Tommy waited outside with the second one.

"King Philza is a kind man," the guard assured Tommy when the other stepped inside, "He may be known for his exploits with death, but he will not hurt you needlessly." Tommy was quiet, he didn't really know how to respond. After all, if something had happened, it wouldn't be needless to hurt Tommy. He was really only there for ... for politics, and so it wouldn't be needless to hurt him.

“You’re only here to watch me, aren’t you,” Tommy said quietly, knowing this could get him slapped or worse. He was being disrespectful, and bad things happened when Tommy was disrespectful. He was going to die or be hit or be on the floor or cast out or locked up. He bowed his head, just so that the guard would have an easier chance at doing what he wanted.

When in doubt, submit. However much it was outside of his personality, he needed to do it, because his personality was wrong, wasn’t that what Dream had taught him.

Tommy needed to bow, to kneel, to not act like himself, but he wasn’t sure what the person in front of him wanted. Tommy wished that people would just be clear with him, because it didn’t seem fair to make him suffer just for ... for what? Just let him know what they wanted, and Tommy would do it. He would do anything to get rid of the blistering uncertainty.

“Something happened,” Tommy said, getting the courage to speak again, “Something happened, and now I-” Tommy cut himself off, because he was a coward, because he was wrong, because what had happened made them treat Tommy like a threat or a prisoner. He was, he was both, although he wasn’t very strong, and they had been treating him kindly so far. But clearly his time was up and it was time for Tommy to face the music.

“Yes,” the guard said, “something happened. It is up to the king what you can know, but yes, something happened.” The other guard stepped out of the room.

“The king is ready to see him now.”

“Follow me, please,” the guard said, with a completely unnecessary courtesy.

Tommy followed behind.

“Your Highness,” the guard said, entering the darkened room, “Prince THeseus, is here.”

“Thank you,” Philza said, but his voice sounded broken, “you may leave us for now.” The guard stood for a moment, before turning to Tommy.

“Do you want-” The guard stopped for a moment, “Since you and the esteemed prince will be alone with him, it would be wisest for your safety to-” The guard pulled something from his belt that clanked and Tommy knew that sound.

Tommy fucking knew that sound.

Fuck.

“Of course,” Philza said, “Be gentle, please.”

“Of course,” the guard said approaching TOMmy. Tommy could do this. Tommy could be good.

Tommy offered his arms to the chains, as he had done many times in his own country. When his father had to chain him, when Tommy deserved it. He didn’t know what was happening, but Philza thought he deserved it, and Tommy wouldn’t fight him. He could be good. The guard looked slightly disturbed, maybe even disgusted, which was a fair response to Tommy.

Tommy tried not to look uncomfortable or comfortable or like anything at all. There was nothing that he needed to do but submit and listen, and that was the best way to come out of this as easy as possible. Nobody else needed to help Tommy, but Tommy himself.

The chains were cold around his wrists, but he knew that they’d be even colder if the room weren’t heated. He was thankful for a moment, for the fact that he was in a room with royalty and wouldn’t be allowed to freeze.

“I’m sorry, Prince Theseus,” the guard said, and he sounded so soft, softer than Dream had ever spoken to him. It was soft like Wilbur, soft like his brothers, and Tommy would have cried if he wasn’t so focused on being good. And good prisoners did not cry. That was what

Tommy was, that was what he had always been. It made no sense to get annoyed at the change, because there was no change, Tommy was still the same, his position was still the same. The honeymoon period was just over, and now Tommy had to deal with it.

Tommy merely bowed his head and felt the chains around his wrist.

The guard left the room afterward and Tommy didn't dare raise his head. In fact, he nearly dropped to his knees, because he was in the presence of royalty, and royalty deserved respect. If this was his father, then he would have been forced to his knees by now.

Phil already said he didn't like Tommy kneeling, but that had been when Tommy wasn't in fucking chains so that probably didn't apply anymore.

Tommy fell to his knees, and Phil was worried. At first he thought that the boy's legs had simply given out and Tommy couldn't stand. He was worried that Tommy was too weak from something to stand. Maybe he had been poisoned, and Phil was wrong about who committed the attempt and an assassin had gone for Tommy too and he was hurt or poisoned. The assassin had gotten in and out with no struggle, no trace, and must have known the inside of the castle better than any outsider should.

Phil was worried that Tommy was begging for his life, but then he saw the way Tommy was bowing. Kneeling really. It was. Well, it wasn't the customary way for the Antarctic Empire. It wasn't the normal way that someone would show respect in his country, but Phil still did recognize the bow.

"Prince Theseus," Phil said, trying to afford him all of the respect that he could (even while in chains, just in case everything wasn't what it looked like, "please. There is no need. There's no reason to do that. Please." But Tommy didn't move, acted like he didn't even hear Phil, and Philza didn't know what to do, except go over to Tommy himself.

"Tommy," Phil tried, because this was not the place for familiar words and names, but he wasn't sure what else would get through to Tommy, "Tommy can you lift your head."

"I'm sorry, sir," Tommy said quietly, "I'm sorry. I know it means nothing. I know I mean nothing, but please." that was. That was horrifying.

“Tommy,” Phil tried again, “Tommy, I’m not. Tommy I am King Philza, of the Antarctic Empire. You are currently in the medical wing of my castle.” There was silence for a moment, before Tommy twitched, seeming to come back to himself.

“I apologize,” Tommy said, but he stood up as Phil requested. He was taller than Phil, taller by quite a bit, but he slouched as if trying to keep himself down.

“Tommy, I called you here because I needed to talk to you. Something happened, and it looks like you might have been involved.” Phil gestured to the bed in the center of the room that Tommy hadn’t even dared to look at. “Tonight, an assassin attempted to murder one of my sons.” Philza’s voice was weak, but Tommy made no mention of it. Tommy was weaker. Tommy was terrified.

“The assassin had the seal of the SMP on him, and had a command with the royal seal on it.” Philza showed Tommy a paper, and Tommy, despite his horror, read it. NThere it was. The seal of the royal empire of the SMP. the same seal that Tommy had marked his letters to his brothers with.

There were no copies. And even if there was, Tommy knew his father’s handwriting.

“The seal could be faked,” Philza said, “but it was not worth the risk to me.” Tommy nodded, almost robotically, without really thinking about what he was doing.

He knew what it meant, when the terms of their peace were broken. He knew the leverage that the empire had over Dream, that it was him, and with the terms of peace broken, it was entirely their right to break him..

Tommy was scared, but he would be good. He would not bring dishonor to anyone. He would be good.

Still, Philza sounded pleading, so Tommy gave him the last bit of reassurance that he could.

“Even if the seal were faked, your majesty,” Tommy said, “that is my father’s handwriting.” And with those words, Tommy was pretty sure that he had sealed his death sentence.

“Ah,” the king said, sounding beyond pained, “thank you.” The room was quiet for a moment, except the light breaths coming from the bed. Tommy looked-he finally looked and there was Wilbur.

“It’s a knife wound,” Philza said, “laced in poison, thankfully the assassin missed any arteries with the knife, but counteracting the poisons was still painful. They say he’ll live, thank Prime.” Tommy could have cried with relief.

At least his father wasn’t successful, with the murder attempt. His declaration of war, however ...

“Tommy, you know what this means, yes?” And Tommy knew exactly what it meant. It meant that Tommy’s life was forfeit. It meant that Dream really didn’t care what happened to Tommy and although he knew that, had known it his entire life, because you could adopt a street kid, but you couldn’t make him valuable. Couldn’t make him matter more than he ever had been as a street rat (just a thieving little raccoon of a child, scrounging for food on the streets and at night sleeping with the rest of the garbage), it still hurt. But Tommy wouldn’t cry. He could be good. He would submit.

There would be no reason to draw this out, unless Philza or one of the princes themselves wanted to.

Part of Tommy ached at the likelihood of not being able to say goodbye to Wilbur. Part of him ached at the fact that Wilbur probably wouldn’t care that he never said goodbye to Tommy.

He was wearing the sweater gifted by the other right now, and it meant nothing, because Tommy meant nothing.

“I do,” Tommy said quietly.

“I have already drafted a declaration of war,” Philza said, and god, all that Philza needed was a little inciting, a little blow to Dream’s pride. The execution of one of his princes, however little favor he had for him, would be a blow to Dream’s pride. “I-I have to go to war with your father, Tommy, and I am sorry.” The fact that Philza was sorry that he was going to kill Tommy didn’t really make it feel any better, but it was nice of him. It made it hurt a little more, actually. It made Tommy’s gut twist up and made him want to puke, but Tommy wasn’t going to puke in the face of royalty. Tommy was good.

Tommy could be good.

“I will do my best to make sure you are comfortable,” Philza said, “But when it comes to my country, sacrifices have to be made somethings.” Tommy nodded. He wasn’t that important. That was all he really was-a small thing to sacrifice for the good of other people. It was alright. It couldn’t be wrong, with all of the people that did it.

Tommy couldn’t help but feel relieved that at least his letter to Tubbo and Ranboo was well on its way. So surely, when they heard of his death, maybe it would comfort them. Tommy was sorry, but he didn’t really get a choice in his death, did he now.

“Mmm,” a voice said, a tired voice, and oh, that was Wilbur. The bed shuffled, and suddenly all of Philza’s attention was off of Tommy and onto Wilbur. “ was goin’ on?”

“You were poisoned,” Philza said, and as pained as his voice was, there was also so much softness, so much love, and god, Tommy would do anything to have that directed toward him before he died. But it wasn’t going to, and Tommy was selfish for that thought. He scratched anxiously down his arms, fingernails hardly catching in the skin. White scratches remained, but not enough to cause him to bleed.

They were insignificant. Like Tommy.

“And stabbed,” Wilbur added, sounding much younger than he actually was, “Do they have a prognosis.”

“You need rest,” Phil said, “And some change in bandages, but you’ll live.”

“And Techno?” Wil asked.

“He’s fine,” Phil said, “Nobody came for him. Right now, he’s down with the head of defense trying to figure out what happened. He has the best guards surrounding him, and he’s quite formidable himself. He wanted to be here when you woke up, so I should probably send someone for him.

“And Tommy,” Wilbur gasped, looking a bit more awake, “Is Tommy okay? No one-”

“No one touched him,” Phil said, “He’s right here.” And Tommy knew a cue when he heard one, so he stepped up, as little threatening as possible, to Philza’s side.

“Tommy,” Wilbur said happily, and maybe he didn’t know that Tommy’s father was almost responsible for his death (because there was no reason for anyone to be that happy to see Tommy, unless perhaps, Wilbur was on drugs from his treatment), “Phil, what the fuck did you do.”

“It’s a precaution,” Phil said, “We couldn’t. We can’t be sure until the investigation is complete. There’s an unignorable amount of evidence-”

“Phil,” Wilbur said, and Tommy didn’t know why the other was whining so much, and Tommy was confused and sleepy and- “Phil, Tommy wouldn’t hurt me. Bring Techno in the room and get these chains off of him. Tommy wouldn’t hurt me.” The room was silent. “Would you, Tommy?”

“Of course not, Wil-Prin-your majesty?” Tommy wasn’t sure how to address Wilbur.

“It’s okay,” Wilbur said, “However you want. What was it you called me the other day, Wilby?” If the situation were not what it was, Tommy would have smacked him on the shoulder and not felt bad about it. “Look, we both need sleep though. And someone rudely woke us up. So Tommy, get over here and pass the fuck out, okay?”

And Tommy.

Tommy knew that his situation was hopeless. Knew that he would die probably before the week was out. Knew that his father had declared a war that he was too egotistical to see that he couldn't win. Knew that he had failed his country. But maybe this was the universe granting Tommy his last wish to say goodbye to Wilbur. This was the universe's last time giving him a glimpse of what having a family that loved him was like. It was a gift, because Tommy would never see his brothers again, unless death brought them to the same place.

It was a gift and Tommy could be grateful, and Tommy would savor it.

Who was he to deny a crown prince his wish anyways.

-

It was only after Tommy fell asleep that Wilbur started crying.

“Dad, what the fuck,” Wilbur said through his tears, “Dad, I-why is he-”

“We were worried,” Philza said, “I like Tommy. Believe me. I like Tommy, but your safety has to come first, Wil. you and Techno’s safety has to come first. ”

“I’m twenty four,” Wilbur said, “Techno’s twenty one. Tommy is sixteen-which of us sounds like the threat.”

“Wilbur,” Philza said, “Believe me, I know. But from the evidence we have, there is a high chance he was involved in a *murder attempt*.”

“He’s Tommy,” Wilbur said, like that was an argument.

“And his father is Dream,” Philza said, “And who knows what he picked up from the man.”

Wilbur was silent, clearly not very happy.

“I know-” Wilbur cut himself off, “I’ve had assassinations attempts before. But this was so ...close. Dad. I was so scared. I don’t want to die.” Philza approached the bed and embraced his son, running his hand through his hair and patting him with the other hand. “I don’t want anyone else I love to get hurt. I don’t want Tommy to get hurt.”

Why did everything have to hurt so much?

-

Tommy woke up warm, which was a very typical thing to happen in the Antarctic Empire, although it seemed like the reverse would be true. It was odd, he knew, but the castle was kept very warm and it was very nice for Tommy to be in.

Tommy woke up warm and he was pressed against something else, which was very odd because Tommy’s bed was in the middle of the room, unfortunately, which meant that he could roll off and bonk his head on something.

Tommy woke up and his wrists hurt and it took him a moment to remember that there were chains there, and that this might be the last time that he ever woke up, if his execution was scheduled quickly.

Even so, he was still cuddled in Wilbur’s side for some Prime forsaken reason, still allowed this close to a prince when he should be dying for what had been done to him. On the other side of Wilbur, Techno was sleeping, and wow, all three of them really did not fit in the bed, but they were trying. Techno was squishing Wilbur, which explained why the other was so close to Tommy, embracing him like a small child in his sleep.

If last night had been anything else, then Tommy would have been pretty happy with the arrangement. It felt like he was at home, almost, if home was three people who had the right to kill him, and if home meant that Tommy would die for the slights of his father.

Tommy woke up and made no move, because he was pretty sure that any move he made would wake up Wilbur. And Wilbur was probably tired, having had an attempt on his life last night and all that.

Wilbur deserved rest, and Tommy would hate himself even more if he tore that away from the other.

However deep of a sleeper Wilbur was being, apparently the same couldn't be said about Techno, or perhaps the other's nerves were simply wound tightly after the events of last night. Tommy wouldn't blame him. Even though he hadn't been there, the whole thing still made him nervous for Wil's life. If someone had done that to Ranboo or Tubbo, Tommy would be pent up as well.

"Tommy," Techno said quietly, "Tommy why are you ... do you know who has the keys for those?" Tommy glanced at the restraints around his wrists. Had The guard who chained him kept the keys or did Philza have a pair. He didn't know. Did it matter? Obviously, because the second prince of the Antarctic Empire was asking him the question, and why would he ask if he didn't want the answer, Tommy needed to stop thinking and just do what was asked of him because he was being fucking stupid.

"I don't know," Tommy said, "I apologize." Technoblade shook his head.

"No need," Techno said, "I'll find them myself." Technoblade, ever so carefully extricated himself from Wilbur. He looked conflicted, like he didn't want to leave his brother, but still, he removed himself and sat up.

Tommy hadn't really seen the prince's hair look like a wreck. He'd seen him when he was more casual, when his hair was looser and the prince wasn't so concerned with appearances, but never completely wild.

Techno had put no thought into his hair since he woke up, obviously. Tommy was willing to bet that his hair was the same, but of course, Tommy didn't have dignity so who really cared what his hair looked like anyways. To be honest, it didn't fucking matter. Tommy didn't fucking matter.

"Can you get out of there without waking him up?" Technoblade asked. Tommy shook his head.

“Alright then,” Technolade said, and then ever so carefully walked over to Tommy's side of the bed. “I can help get him off of you.” With the combined effort, they somehow managed to not wake up Wilbur. Tommy couldn't be very helpful because he could hardly use his hands.

“Come on, Tommy,” Technoblade said, “The guards will watch him and we'll probably be back before Wil wakes up. Besides,” Technoblade said, whispering to Tommy, “The bastard's so soft, he'll probably be happier that we're doing this instead.”

Tommy wasn't even sure what this was, but he followed along. He wasn't about to question the Technoblade. That would just be stupid, right?

The halls were teeming with guards, some on their regular patrol routes and some clearly not. Some gave Tommy the odd glance, but Techno stared them down and they backed off. Tommy wasn't really sure why Techno was ... protecting him? But it was probably none of his business and maybe Tommy was imagining it anyway.

“Dadza,” Techno said, upon barging into his father's study, “Dad, why is the child in chains.”

PHil looked up from his probably important paperwork. He wouldn't be annoyed with Techno for the interruption, of course. Techno was his son and he loved him, but Tommy? Tommy was here and he would be more pissed at him if that were even possible. It was going to be terrible. Tommy didn't want to get in trouble for stuff before his execution. It would suck. Tommy was going to hate it.

“It's a precaution,” Phil said, “We don't know what was happening last night. Everything hasn't been finalized yet, but-”

“Dad, you're being too protective. Tommy here isn't goin' to do anything.” That was true, but Techno had no way of knowing that. He shouldn't say things like that, because it could gelt everyone else hurt, and then Tommy would be responsible and Tommy was already going to die and they were going to be the ones to sign his death warrant and - and

“Tommy, please breathe,” Techno whispered softly, “Dad won't hurt you.” But Philza was going to execute him or-or something that was literally the terms of the peace treaty. Philza

was required to keep Tommy safe for as long as Dream held the peace and Dream was directly responsible for the assassination attempt of his son, so Tommy was going to die. Philza was going to kill him.

The room was silent.

“Prince Th-Tommy,” The king corrected himself, “Tommy, I am not going to kill you.” Oops, had Tommy said something out loud, but either way.

“Tommy, what.” Techno was silent for a moment before erupting again, “Phil this is exactly why you shouldn’t have done that last night. I-”

“I couldn’t risk anything happening to Wilbur,” Phil said, “what did you want me to do, let an possible enemy cuddle with him with no precautions?”

“It’s Tommy, Phil,” Technoblade argued, as if the fact that it was him should have meant anything (it didn’t to anyone else, why did it to Techno or Wilbur?). Techno kept Tommy in a purely protective hold and stared at his father.

“He could have given the assassination information to get in and out,” Philza explained, sounding like he had gone over this a million times, “The timing is incredibly suspicious, but-” Phil looked Tommy in the eye. “-There is no evidence that points to you in particular. You have given me no reason to suspect you otherwise, so I’m sorry. I never meant to hurt you, and I apologize.”

What.

What on earth?

“It is perfectly fine, your majesty,” Tommy said, reverting to the polite, socially acceptable version of himself that he used in situations like this. Tommy in this mode could be gracious and accepting and hide away his actual self so that nothing was able to hurt him. Tommy like this could be safe.

As safe as he could be sitting in a room with people who had every right to kill him, that was.

“It was in your right,” Tommy finished, bowing his head slightly, “especially since my father broke your treaty, it is in your right to do with me as you wish.” A silent horror fell around the room.

“Phil,” Techno said, “I need to unlock his hands, please.” The key was handed over with no further argument.

“Tommy,” Techno said, “You are not going to die.” Torture then. Lifelong imprisonment. Banishment to a far land. Enslavement. There were a lot of ways to show Dream that he had failed in his attempt other than executing Tommy. “Tommy, we don’t want to hurt you. I don’t care what Phil says, you are innocent, and you are not going to die.” Technoblade unlocked his cuffs and stood by him, arm around his shoulders.

It hit Tommy that what Techno just said was treason. If Tommy said that in front of his father, he would have the beating to last a lifetime-literally, because Dream would probably beat him to death for saying that.

Why was he willing to commit treason for Tommy? The idea was ridiculous.

No one should die for Tommy. No one should suffer for him

Tommy was gone. He couldn’t hear Phil argue that, no of course he wasn’t going to kill Tommy, of course not, he just was going to war with his family.

He didn’t notice when Techno led him out of the room and back to Wilbur, back to sleep. He was not really paying attention anymore.

Tommy didn’t care.

To Tommy, he might as well already be dead.

-

Wilbur woke up the day after being almost assassinated extremely late. He remembered waking up at some point and seeing Tommy, and seeing his pretty much younger brother scared and chained and he remembered going back to sleep with the other boy in his arms, but now there was no Tommy in his arms and Wilbur was scared.

“Tommy?” Wilbur called, knowing that Tommy probably wouldn’t hear him. “Tommy?”

“Wilb’y?” Tommy’s voice called from nearby. Wilbur opened his eyes and searched, finally finding Tommy sleeping on a chair nearby.

“Tommy.”

“Wilbur.”

“You’re okay.”

“I’m okay,” Tommy assured, ‘You’re awake.’”

“I am,” Wilbur said, sounding amused, “Why are you trying to sleep on the chair, that’s going to break your neck.”

“I’m not going to break my neck,” Tommy said, ‘I’m fine.’”

“”Why the fuck are you over there,” Wilbur asked.

Tommy was silent.

And then Wilbur remembered that Tommy had fallen asleep in chains last night, and he remembered what the assassin had told him before he had almost killed him.

“Tommy, it wasn’t your fault,” Wilbur insisted, “Tommy, you know that this wasn’t your fault, right?”

“Of course, Wilbur,” Tommy said, and Wilbur felt relief wash over him,” But that doesn’t mean that I don’t need to face it.”

What.

What the fuck.

Tommy no.

“Tommy-”

“Look, Wil,” Tommy said, “It was my father’s command, and that’s basically a declaration of war. And surely, you know the tradition of what people do when ... when they have a hostage and the terms aren’t met. It’s okay, Wilbur. It doesn’t really matter anyways.”

“You matter,” Wilbur insisted, “Tommy, I won’t let you die. You matter. Philza isn’t going to kill you. He’s- my dad isn’t a monster-” That seemed to make Tommy work again.

“No, no,” Tommy said hurriedly, “I didn't mean. I didn't mean to say that— I mean. I didn't-”

“Shh,” Wilbur said, “it’s okay Tommy. Just. Come here, okay? It’s going to be okay.” Wilbur was the crown prince of the Empire. He would hate himself if he couldn’t do anything for Tommy.

There was no way that he was going to let anything happen. Wilbur was the only person who had been in his bedroom that night outside of the assassins. Wilbur was the only person who knew the story there, and Tommy couldn’t have had anything to do with it. As hazy as his memory surrounding it was, that much he knew.

Tommy was like his brother now, and Wilbur would protect him with his life.

Chapter End Notes

haha, how was the roller coaster ride? did u have fun??

anyways, ty for reading, hope it was enjoyable!

Just a quite note, I know that some of the characters motivations/actions might seem weird. I promise I do have genuine reasons for why they're acting the way that they do, but I just might not be explaining it very well. If you have questions about that, I'm happy to answer (I am also happy to answer questions in general. or answer anything in general, even if I'm pretty awkward lol).

Also, about punz, I tried to look at pronouns for them, and google told me c!punz has been referred to with he/they? if that's not right or has changed, i want to fix that.

It is 1am where I live rn, and I've got school and work tomorrow, so there might be lil mistakes everywhere, sorry about that <3

his mind is in a different place, will everyone please give him a little bit of space

Chapter Summary

Dream is a lying liar who fucking lies, what else is new.

tubbo time :]

Chapter Notes

starting with: thank you so much for 9k hits??? and over 600 kudos? um, the idea that anyone enjoys something I've written is so cool to me.

Here is a short chapter. It's a lil filler, but I have to build up to things :] Sorry it's been so long since my last update. I have a long winded response, but you're completely welcome to skip.

Anyways, yeah, it's been almost a month? uhh? Sorry about that. It's not that I haven't worked on this story for an entire month, but I haven't posted in a while because posting makes me anxious. Sometimes. Which stems from a bit of a larger problem in me haha uh. Yeah, so in that month I haven't updated, my parents have had me start therapy, and it's good! if you need to and have the opportunity, do therapy. it's helpful, at least the bit i've done so far. I've also had school :/ and some stupid irl responsibilty stuff I had to take care of. I know I never really had an actual update schedule anyways, but I do feel bad. Yeah, I hope this chapter will get me more consistent sorry this was so long.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Tubbo,” Dream said, approaching his oldest, “Tubbo, I have a meeting tonight, and I want you to attend.” That was unusual. Dream did occasionally teach Tubbo himself, something about the experience and keeping the family line smooth with training, but Dream rarely invited Tubbo into his meetings.

They were secret, of course, and apparently none of his business.

Tubbo accepted, as if he had a choice, although his nerves were shaking. He hated meetings, he hated his father, and he hated that all of his were necessary, but it wasn't like he could resist.

Dream would hurt him. Dream would hurt Ranboo.

Instead, Tubbo robotically moved to his room to prepare himself.

It would be no good if it looked like he was crying. It would be no good to show emotion in a room full of people who would smell it out like sharks with blood. And so, Tubbo dressed himself in the most pretentious outfit he could. He was the crown prince and a son of Dream. He could be frigid and serious and in control.

It may have meant little to Dream, but the prestige of his house meant everything inside the walls of the meeting rooms.

Tubbo wore his royalty. His pants were simple, but still spoke of wealth and hierarchy, they were made of fine material, dark and long, loose enough to be comfortable, but clearly tailored to fit him exactly.

His undershirt was black and layered over with a light green shirt with the eye of XD on it. It was a homage to their god, who Tubbo rarely believed in, but it was traditional, and so for today, Tubbo wore it proudly.

Tubbo combed his hair back, because he was going to be as presentable as possible.

And when Tubbo was ready, he stepped through the halls of the castle with enough purpose to part anyone who stood in his way. Tubbo was not one to be angry, but to survive in his father's court, he had to gather his emotions away and use them only as weapons. Between Ranboo and Tommy, Tubbo was free to be himself but between the walls of the court, there was only space for a prince, and no space for Tubbo.

He was introduced to the meeting room, held on a long table full of nobles and other important people. Tubbo sat at the right side of his father at the head of the table. He was silent, when necessary, and besides, it seemed like Dream had something important to share.

“Today,” Dream said, “I received the most ... unfortunate news courtesy of the Antarctic Empire.”

Tubbo felt something drop in his chest. All he could think was Tommy.

Was his brother okay? What was going on? But he said nothing. He showed nothing. Instead, he listened intently and waited. Waited for what his father would say, no matter how much he would probably hate it.

“I have received a declaration of war from the Antarctic Empire,” Dream said, “They have framed us with an assassination attempt on their crown prince and used it as an excuse to break the peace between us.” His hands felt shaky.

No

No, XD no ...

The fragile peace was all that was keeping Tommy safe, without it ...

... they could tear Tommy apart, and in terms of treaties, they would be in the right.

(Regardless of what tradition said, if the royal family of the Antarctic hurt Tommy, Tubbo would tear them apart with his bare hands)

“Unfortunately, this means the execution of our third prince,” Dream said. No sorrow was audible in his voice. Tubbo could have ripped his father’s throat out for that. Except he was in court. Tubbo would listen and he wouldn’t fucking cry. “The empire refuses to negotiate

or reconsider. The funeral for the prince will be held on the third day, followed with the appropriate period of mourning.” The council was quiet. While most of the nobles were abysmal people, they were not all monsters, and the death of a sixteen year old because of decisions that they had made likely weighed on them. Probably weighed on them more than it did on Dream, who clearly didn’t give a fuck about Tommy.

Who never had.

Tubbo was in court. Tubbbo wouldn’t cry.

“In the meantime, however,” Dream said, “we must prepare for war.” There was outrage in the room. Rage at yet another war, while they were still fighting with the badlands. Confusion. Tubbo let all of it wash over him like it meant nothing.

“Silence,” Tubbo said, uncharacteristically harsh. The room fell silent, half because they were listening to Tubbo and half at the shock of the crown prince, ever so silent, speaking. Tubbo didn't really like speaking and rarely had a reason to. Give Dream more reasons to get pissed at him? No thank you.

“The Empire has murdered my brother for a slight they failed to investigate,” Tubbo said, “And that cannot be allowed to stand. If we let this pass, more atrocities will be committed against us. It is a sacrifice, but it always has been.”

The room, thankfully, fell into agreement and a general air of anger, united this time. Tubbo was satisfied with his work, and chafingly, Dream looked like he was as well. Tubbo never thought he would see the day when Dream was happy about something Tubbo did, but after all, Dream wanted the country to be strong.

The discussion continued. Over who would lead and if they needed to pull people from the Badlands and the war there, which wasn't nearly finished.

“I can lead in place of the generals,” Tubbo said, “I am of age, and I have the education. Vengeance for my brother would be a fitting reason.” Tubbo didn’t really want to go to war, didn’t want to make decisions that would get people killed, but the empire had murdered his baby brother. Treaty be damned, Tubbo wanted to fuck them up, if he could. Besides, if he

offered, then maybe Dream wouldn't send away the last baby brother he had alive. Maybe Dream wouldn't let more of his family die for his failings.

Finally, the meeting came to a close, a declaration of war was drafted, and the empire was torn between two different battles.

Tubbo exited the room shaking when he had to stand, but none of the nobles were able to see it, and that was all that Tubbo could really ask for.

He made his way down the familiar halls, which felt so alien and altered in his mental state, to Ranboo's room. The other wasn't in, but Tubbo didn't think that he had the strength to search for him, so he simply waited.

Waited for Ranboo to return from wherever he had gone, though it was probably tutoring.

"Tubbo," Ranboo said, upon entering the room. And Tubbo, who had held back his tears for so long, so long until it was safe at last, began to sob. "Tubbo what happened." Ranboo was on Tubbo in an instant, ignoring the painful burn when Tubbo's tears brushed against him.

It took a few minutes before Tubbo was collected enough to talk to Ranboo.

"Tommy is gone," Tubbo said, and Ranboo was quick to comfort him. Missing Tommy was an all encompassing thing, and he shouldn't have expected anyone, especially Tubbo, to not return to thinking about it. It upset Ranboo often, of course it would upset Tubbo as well.

"I know," Ranboo said, "He-"

"You don't know," Tubbo said, "He's-Ranboo, he's fucking dead." What. Horror churned in Ranboo's stomach, and fear shivered down his spine. There was no way. He couldn't be. Tommy was-

“There was an assassination attempt on the crown prince of the Antarctic Empire,” Tubbo said, “And they blamed it on us. And so now Tommy’s-”

Ranboo’s cheeks burned, but he couldn’t have stopped the tears if he wanted to (the maladaptive effect of being a hybrid of two things that were never meant to mix). The shock was too much, so he just held Tubbo as they both cried.

“I am going to kill them,” Tubbo whispered, “I agreed to lead. I am going to destroy them and their empire, and then I’m going to destroy dad for letting this happen.” Tubbo paused. “And then I am going to rule and make sure nothing like this can ever happen again. I don’t- I want to do what Tommy would have wanted. What would that be?”

Ranboo was silent. Both of them were.

Sadness laced his eyes, and anger laced his heart. Tubbo may have been fiery, but Ranboo could be just as dangerous.

“I am going with you,” Ranboo insisted, “If you get to-”

“I can’t lose two brothers,” Tubbo insisted, “what if something goes wrong-”

“You really think that Dream is going to protect me.”

Tubbo pulled away just a little bit, just so that he could look Ranboo in the eyes.

“No,” Tubbo said, “no of course not. He didn’t even seem upset when he was talking about Tommy, of course I don’t think. He doesn’t really care about any of us, after all, I don’t think. But still. Ranboo, war is war, you can’t- please, i can’t lose two brothers.”

“Neither can I, Tubbo,” Ranboo insisted, “Please don’t make me.” And how could Tubbo argue with that.

Much like three very much alive princes across the world, the two fell asleep on each other, fitfully and unwell.

All mourning a very much alive child.

-

Morning came, and Tubbo wiped around his own eyes and then Raboo's. He couldn't promise that he wouldn't cry, because Tommy deserved to be mourned properly, but he was going to try his best to be strong for Ranboo. To mourn Tommy as he deserved. Let Ranboo be safe, because Tubbo was the only buffer between Ranboo and Dream.

And as much as really didn't want to bring Ranboo onto the battlefield (Ranboo was hardly older than Tommy, and it wouldn't be fair) it wasn't like he could leave him in the castle alone. He could get hurt. After all, the castle wasn't a safe place for Tommy, so why would it be for Ranboo?

War wasn't pleasant, but for Tommy and Ranboo, he'd do anything.

-

-

Part of Wilbur hurt so much looking at Tommy. Watching him become a shell of what he had been, retreating back into himself, because he didn't feel safe, because he wasn't given reason to feel safe.

It hurt, and Wilbur didn't want to see it. With the walk of preparing war, of Dream's returned declaration, it was all very real. People were going to die.

Wilbur himself wasn't an idiot. He knew strategy, he had been raised to be able to lead his country to war if the need was ever to arise, and clearly, the need had.

Phil was still alive, and thank Prime for Phil even if he had chained up his younger brother.

Technoblade wanted to go to war. Technoblade had always ... well. He enjoyed combat, not necessarily to the death, but sparring and battling had always excited the voices in his younger brother's head and kept them quiet. For some reason, the voices wanted blood. It was why Phil took him on his exploits, took him to war when he could have stayed home in relative comfort.

Because it kept them under control, even if it upset Techno. It kept everything running smoothly, even if it made Wilbur want to die.

Wilbur had no doubt that Technoblade was going with his father. And Wilbur? Wilbur would go wherever Tommy went. He was the closest with the kid, Tommy was the most comfortable with him, and someone had to stay with Tommy to make sure that no bastard killed him thinking they were doing the will of the king or the best for the country.

War was coming, and now that it had been declared, the entire country was revving up for it. Strategizing, working, pulling in recruits and training and mobilizing their resources. Preparing the defenses close to the border and trying to get everything clear that would be in the crossfire. It was impossible, of course, but the effort, the lives that they could save, would be worth it.

They could not allow the threat to Wilbur's life to go unpunished, Wilbur knew, and Wilbur watched as his world was plunged into war and held the sleeping Tommy a little closer. They'd need to have a long talk when the other had had enough sleep to have an actual conversation with.

But for now, Wilbur could just be.

that was f u n right?

everyone agree quickly

(Hopeless rambling? Text so incomprehensible it could summon a demon? In my story I refuse to work on earlier than one am? pls tell)

(but nicely i'm fragile)

and were so calm but were fucking scared (FUCKING SCARED)

Chapter Summary

BEDROCK BROS!!! I DON'T KNOW ANY OTHER WORDS

ANYWAYS, WILBUR GOT HIS CHANCE, TECHNO NEEDS HIS BEFORE PLOT HITS EVERYONE

Chapter Notes

HI IT'S ANOTHER TINY CHAPTER COURTESY OF GETTING SENT HOME SICK FROM WORK :] I'm currently trying to edit through a 27k bit I apparently just left as a chapter? It's too many words, I don't know why I did this to myself.

Anyways, as always, enjoy, get enraged, maybe cry, but have a good time :]

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The voices were screaming. They didn't scream this long for often. They occasionally got really excited about something they called the sellout timer, they occasionally got excited at something they saw, and occasionally would screech E for no apparent reason, but they didn't scream all the time. Sometimes they were nothing more than a constant hum in his ear.

Right now, they were screaming, and showing no sign of stopping.

Blood for the blood god.

The worst part was that Techno very much did want blood. So much blood.

Techno wanted to wash the walls red with the blood of whoever attempted to kill Wilbur. He wanted to end Dream for letting it happen, wanted to destroy the royal family of the SMP, wanted death and destruction with a rage so deep in his bones that he didn't know how to control it.

But he could not give in to the more animalistic side of himself. Could not prove himself to be nothing more than a beast who couldn't understand what it meant to be civilized, because Techno was a person.

Not that being a person was easy in the face of the battlefield. He knew to compartmentalize. He knew how to focus on his objective rather than his actions.

Regardless, chat was screaming, and it was fucking annoying.

Techno just wanted them to go away. He wanted them gone, but he wasn't on a battlefield right now, he couldn't just run off into the woods to satiate his bloodlust like he used to before Phil found him, no, all he had was a room for training and a netherite blade.

Techno knew he was vicious when he was training, so he trained alone when he was this angry.

It was healthier. It was safer. There really wasn't anything safe or healthy about his training habits, but well, Techno had to do something. What Phil didn't know wouldn't hurt him, probably. His methods weren't the best for coping necessarily, but would have been?

The rhythm of his weapon against the training dummies over and over and over again soothed something in his soul. It took his mind off of things. Let him go blank, let him forget about the world he was living in for a moment.

In his blind passion, he heard the door open, but only registered that there was something there, and he had a sword in his hand.

Techno wouldn't have hurt them. The noise drew his eyes.

One scream.

One scream was all it took to shake him out of it, and it was hardly a scream, cut off almost before it even began.

Tommy.

Fuck.

He almost killed Tommy.

“Sorry,” Tommy said, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry. You can stab me. I’m sorry.” Techno’s vision cleared from the red red *red* he had been seeing over everything, and all he could see was Tommy, wringing his hands nervously in front of himself and staring dubiously at the tip of his sword.

“I’m sorry,” Techno said, before registering the second half of what Tommy said, “what the fuck.”

Tommy tilted his head as if he was confused.

Tommy didn’t back away from Technoblade.

No.

Prime no. Didn’t he and Tommy already talk about this?

Techno did not have the energy to deal with this right now, but Tommy was right in front of him so what else was he supposed to do?

“Tommy,” Techno said, just because he didn’t want to believe his sinking suspicion was correct, “Tommy, why would I stab you?”

Tommy kept his head bowed (he didn’t run, didn’t dodge, didn’t make a move to protect himself, and how fucked was that?)

“I don’t-I-really?” Techno raised an eyebrow, and Tommy kept going. “Sorry. Sorry, of course. *He’d* want an answer too. Sorry. Sorry. You know, my dad Hired a hit on your brother? And broke terms of peace? So you’d obviously be well within your rights to kill me or do ... whatever you wanted, of course, of course, um, you knew that sorry. You also seemed pretty angry, and,” Tommy steeled himself almost like was afraid. He tried to mask it, but Technoblade could see through him. “I could be an outlet if you wanted me to be. I probably won’t be alive much longer anyways. I’m sorry.” Tommy fell silent.

Technoblade lowered his sword.

The voices were calling for blood again, but their decision was more decisive than it often was.

The voices wanted blood.

Dream’s blood.

Fucking hell Tommy.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” Techno said, carefully. As much as he wanted to ask questions (and destroy and kill and rip Dream’s throat out)

“It’s okay,” Tommy said, voice nothing like the one that Techno had become familiar with. Tommy was being placating, he was submitting, and Techno had never heard anything worse in his life.

“It’s not,” Techno settled on, “It’s not okay to hurt you, I’m sorry that you’ve been hurt.” Tommy looked visibly confused.

“You have every right,” Tommy said, “I mean-look at me, you can’t really think-Wilbur could have died. An eye for an eye, right? How else-” Tommy took a breath, the first sign he showed that any of this conversation was affecting him (other than every word out of his mouth being the most concerning thing that Techno had ever heard) “How else could-I mean. Isn’t that the point of me being here?”

Techno felt his stomach sink.

When it came to hostages, usually, nothing fucking happened, because parents cared about their children, and the people holding the children didn’t want to face international backlash and an angry, grieving parent.

It was stupid. It was tradition.

Dream, apparently, didn’t fucking care about his son if he was willing to attempt to kill Wilbur so blatantly. The man hadn’t even tried to defend himself, hadn’t even tried to say it was a set up, he just sent his formal answer to the declaration, and was apparently, readying his army the same as the Antarctic Empire was.

No wonder Tommy was on edge all of the time. Techno would have been too.

“Tommy,” Technoblade, “If we killed you, it would be in cold blood. I have killed men before. In the heat of battle and in self defense. But you-you aren’t a threat.” Tommy clearly didn’t understand yet. That was okay. Techno would keep trying, Techno’s family would keep trying. At least, the whole arrangement meant that Tommy was away from the king of the SMP, because clearly he hadn’t been good for Tommy in the slightest. “Tommy, you don’t deserve to die.”

“But Wilbur deserves to be avenged, yeah?” Techno sighed, softly.

“Come into my training room, Tommy,” Technoblade said, “I’ll show you something.” Dutifully, Tommy followed after him in the most un-Tommy like manner possible.

Technoblade sat in one of the chairs he had set against a table in the far side of the room. Usually, he used it for fixing weapons or dummies, but it was getting kind of painful to have the conversation standing up.

He just needed to sit Tommy down and talk to him until he was able to calm down. If he wasn't able to, well, he'd have to get Phil. because Wilbur wasn't really an option at the moment.

God, why did this happen? Because Phil took a shady man up on a shady deal, because Phil liked to think the best of people, and look where that led them. Not that Techno could be upset that Tommy was here. How could he be?

"You can sit down," Techno said, which Tommy clearly took as a command, as he quickly found a seat and sat down almost robotically.

"Tommy," Techno said, "I want you to have this." Techno pulled out a large axe, jokingly dubbed the axe of peace, because no fucker would want to start a fight with someone carrying it.

"I'm sorry, I don't know how ..." Tommy trailed off, before starting to profusely thank Techno. Something like a conditioned response, Techno wasn't really sure what was happening in Tommy's mind.

"I'll teach you," Technoblade said, "so that if anyone ever tries to hurt you, you'll be able to defend yourself. That includes against me. And we can do different weapons, all of the weapons, I just chose the ax, 'cause it's the most intimidatin'" of my collection."

-

Despite himself, Tommy was actually excited.

He *wanted* to spend time with Techno. Where did Tommy's self-preservation go? He knew that he used to be better at protecting himself.

He was being stupid. Despite his proclamations, Technoblade probably really wanted to blow of steam, and what better way to do that than beating up the son of the guy who tried to murder your brother? Honestly, it was pretty clear.

Even though it was probably just an excuse for a beating, Tommy took Techno up on it, because he genuinely liked the guy and Tommy probably wouldn't live much longer.

Maybe he was saving Tommy's death for a more strategic time, maybe he was trying to get all of the drama and nuance he could get, Tommy didn't know, but there was no way that they were going to keep him around in their castle, not when he was that big of a liability.

So Tommy picked up the ax, careful not to level it at techno (he was pretty sure that the only reason the other trusted Tommy with a weapon in the same room was because he knew that Tommy was no threat to him)

Tommy had been a prince under Dream, and Tommy knew how to defend himself. Give him a bow, a knife, a sword, and Tommy, while not the best, could hold his own.

They began. Unlike what Tommy was expecting, Technoblade gave him actual, genuine advice on how to use the weapon. Then in the end, Tommy really shouldn't have been surprised he guessed. Techno had always been far kinder to Tommy than he should have been, so it made sense. Painful, painful sense.

This was going to fall through, he knew it. Until then he selfishly took the tips and time that Techno gave him.

"Techno, why won't you-" Tommy took a breath in between, because he didn't want to screw up the rhythm of attack he had going on, and end up having to play defense. "Why won't you *hurt* me? You know I deserve it. You know-how else ... Dream isn't going to back off with any negotiation, you have to know that. He fights wars until the last moment, he isn't ...

my father isn't rational, like that. He'll sacrifice everything for a goal, everything."

"Even his sons," Technoblade said, although it sounded more like something he hadn't meant to say out loud.

"Even us," Tommy said, "I-have you heard of my oldest brother?" Tommy knew the last thing Techno probably wanted to be hearing was about Tubbo, but Tommy ... Tommy was in a weird mood. Begging for death did that to a person.

What could he lose? His home? His brothers? They were already gone. His relationship with Wilbur wasn't in his hands, and he had no other friends. His life was pretty much forfeit, because if the Antarctic didn't kill him, then Dream surely would.

"I've heard of him," Technoblade said, lowering his weapon, "only met him once." Tommy froze.

"You've met Tubbo?"

"Once," Techno reiterated, "We were both pretty young, I don't remember, but you were just a baby, really."

"You met ... me before?" Technoblade let out a small laugh.

"You were really a baby. Could hardly be a toddler, though I think you got away from the people who were supposed to watch you because Wilbur got his hands on you."

"Huh?"

"Wilbur was a terrible guest at meetings and negotiations and stuff when he was younger. And apparently, while he was wandering around, he just. Found you and took you."

"Yeah?"

“Yeah, and your b-Tubbo, he got so pissed.” Technoblade paused. “It was hilarious. “Course we got interrupted, but whatever.”

“That makes sense, he was planning on killing our dad when he first said he was sending me away,” Tommy snorted, “I’m pretty sure he was half telling the truth and just never got the chance.”

That was an interesting picture Tommy was painting. Technoblade wouldn’t exactly say that he had positive views of the SMP and their princes (other than Tommy, but Tommy was different. He had been able to get to know Tommy far more personally). Techno didn’t have a bad impression when he met the young prince the first time, but he was just that-young and inexperienced, and there was no way his personality was fully formed at that point anyways. However, rumors spread like wildfire throughout the world, and Technoblade had been privy to just. So many of them.

Maybe Tubbo was just soft for his brother. He wouldn’t be the first person that Techno met who was like that, if that was the case.

Then again, Dream wasn’t dead and Tommy was in the empire, so Tubbo could have just been lying.

“Tubbo is my father’s pride and joy,” Tommy said, “But he’d kill Dream himself in a heartbeat if he thought it would be beneficial. My father doesn’t believe in attachments, and did his best to teach us not to either. He didn’t like me, especially. I’m not very useful. So he really didn’t like Ranboo and Tubbo getting close to me-you know. I’d taint them or something.” Technoblade did not know, because this had never been a concern in his childhood, but that didn’t matter.

He couldn’t tell Tommy that to his face. Not right now.

Tommy didn’t speak again. He looked like he was lost in thought, and Techno was too afraid to try to draw him out of it.

At some point, Tommy drifted off to sleep, and Techno scooped up the sleeping child and carried him away.

Tommy would sleep better in his own bed, after all.

And Technoblade would stand guard. Because damn any man who tried to take another brother from him.

-

Tubbo shook. He held his sword, alone in his training room, and shook. He knew that in his position, he'd be ... fighting. That he would come face to face with people and have to ... to stab them. People that hadn't necessarily done anything wrong but be born in a different country. People whose king agreed with stealing Tommy. People who were just people, that Tubbo had to kill.

And they would be trying to kill him too. And his baby brother that was still alive might have to fight against them as well.

This might take his whole family away from him.

Tubbo would have cried, but he had more important things to do. And as long as he had more important things to do, he could focus on those.

Brushing up on his already practiced skills was up there.

Tubbo wasn't necessarily one for fighting. He enjoyed building and he didn't *mind* throwing down, per se, but the thought of taking a life was a bit much (the thought of taking Dream's life made him shiver, but not in fear. Tubbo avoided that side of himself. The side that was blind anger and rage. He could not give into it. Not right now. Not when Tommy needed to be avenged)

He slashed the air in front of him slowly, a practiced combination. No dummies right now, just Tubbo and the air in front of him and a million thoughts swirling in his head.

It was cold, where Tubbo was. The house was always cold, even was Tubbo was in the throne room, where the sunlight shone. Even in his own bed, beneath the blankets that clung too tightly, so tightly that they choked him.

Tubbo wondered if Ranboo felt the same. Tubbo hadn't asked him.

He was afraid that it was.

Ranboo didn't deserve it. Ranboo didn't deserve any of it. And yet. ...

War was coming to their doorstep. It didn't matter who deserved what.

Either way, Tubbo had a duty, and he had no choice. It was up to him.

Dream asked him to lead an army, and Tubbo didn't exactly get the liberty of telling him no. he couldn't when Dream took Tommy, he couldn't when Dream tortured Ranboo in the name of making him useful (that word made Tubbo feel dirty now), and he couldn't now.

But Prime, if there was ever a thing Tubbo didn't want to do, it was to put his brothers in danger.

And now one of them was dead, and the other might follow soon. Fucking hell, Tubbo was a failure.

So he practiced his combinations until his arms ached, and then he retreated into his room to study. He was going to be as prepared as he could possible be for this.

He was studying in his room when he heard a knock at the door.

“Yes?” Tubbo called, tiredly, but as polite as possible in case this was something he could get in trouble for.

He sat up and the door swung open cautiously.

“Your father has requested your presence.” Dread filled Tubbo’s stomach, but he stood up and followed the woman across the castle. If his father requested his presence, there was no way that he could say no.

“King Dream,” the servant said, “The prince has come.” As if there was a way that Tubbo could have avoided it.

“Thank you,” Dream said, “Hello Tubbo.” Tubbo hated the way that he said his name fondly, knew it was nothing more than a game to Dream or a flight of fancy that didn’t last long. Dream didn’t know him, not really. Dream could imagine Tubbo as his puppet, could force him to fight his battles and protect his brothers, but he didn’t know him. He couldn’t fucking love him.

“Hello, your highness,” Tubbo said, not sure what mood it was that Dream was in. Sometimes, he was more relaxed, wanted less formality, wanted to call Tubbo his son and pretend that he had some sort of domestic bliss, but other times he was impossibly cold and Tubbo could never tell which. Especially if it switched at random. Dream was not predictable.

Tubbo bowed on his knees, because that was what was proper, and the last Tubbo wanted was to get himself or Ranboo hurt because he couldn’t show respect to Dream.

He had to listen. He had to do what he said, even if it was bad, because if he didn’t ... Dream would make something worse happen. And then it would be Tubbo’s fault for provoking him.

There was no ideal in the situation, but that was Tubbo's fault. He just. Wasn't smart enough to see it. If he had been a better son, a better negotiator, Tommy might be home safe and sound. Tommy might never have been sent away to a foreign country to inevitably die.

It was Tubbo's fault.

"Tubbo," Dream said casually, "You may rise." Tubbo stood and his father walked over to him.

"I am sending you within the week," Dream said, "I've been informed that you have been readying yourself-and that is admirable. I have overseen your education from the day that you came to my house, and I know that you can be successful."

Tubbo flushed at the praise. Even if he didn't like Dream, there were so few people who talked to him these days, so few people that gave him compliments, and Tubbo swept up every one that he got, even though he knew that he should be on guard.

He hated the Antarctic Empire for what they did to Tommy, and he hated Dream as well, because he played a part in it. He hated himself, last, because he couldn't stop it, even though he had the second most power in the entire country.

"I am sending Ranboo alongside you," Dream said. Tubbo frowned, and Dream, infallible Dream, misinterpreted Tubbo.

"I've been training him," Dream said, which was something that Tubbo knew. Ranboo had been going missing, being called to his father's chambers, and he was disturbed. "I cannot be on the front myself, but well ... There's so much potential in Enderman hybrids. He was worth bringing into the home." Tubbo seethed, but did nothing.

He couldn't. Not yet. But soon?

Dream and Philza would fall by his sword, if Tubbo had anything to say about it.

“I had another thing to talk to you about,” DREAM said, “Ah-Tommy’s funeral. We have no way of retrieving the body. Even if we overtake their capital-and who knows how long that would be-they’ve probably just dumped his body. However, it is still customary to have a funeral.”

Fuck.

Fuck.

Yeah.

“I’ve arranged to have it before you depart,” DREAM said, “I know you loved him, so put it behind you and fight for him.” DREAM smiled, and it creeped Tubbo out. “They are responsible for his death, Tubbo. Remember that.”

As if Tubbo could forget

Chapter End Notes

something something parallels something something lowkey feel like i'm repeating myself every chapter but we get to the fun part soon anyways.

The next chapter should come out sooner than they have been (maybe sometime next week?). Anyways, again thank you for all the kudos and comments on this fic so far, it's been fucking amazing.

(Since I've gotten at least one comment, if you are binging this at night, for the love of everything, but mostly yourself, go to sleep)

sorry haha i fell asleep

Chapter Summary

small sad leading into the big sad, let's go

Chapter Notes

why did this take me forever long to update when i said it would be up next week?

...

sorry to anyone invested on updates. anyways, i edited the part that was giving me trouble while crying over an english assignment. if something doesn't make sense, blame that <3

as always, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Throughout his life, Ranboo was usually plagued by some kind of nightmare or other. But this one was different. Ranboo's nightmare started the same way every time. The bed he was standing in front of in his dream wasn't his bed, and the person in the bed wasn't anyone he knew. He was warm, but the person holding on to him was so *cold*.

Their hands were rough and gripping Ranboo like a lifeline.

He didn't know the person, but he wanted, so badly, to get them away. To leave whatever hell of a place he was in.

He wanted to go home.

He just wanted to go home.

The dream always ended before it really began, with nothing coming of it except the far-away memory of a hazy purple glow. Ranboo woke up with his heart pounding and ice in his veins every single time.

This was no different.

He opened his eyes, standing still while his vision adjusted. The stone flooring was cool beneath his bare feet, and his pajamas were far too thin for the drafty passageway.

The hallway was dirty and hardly lit. This wasn't the domestic part of the castle, it was the way to the dungeon.

Ranboo fled, leaving purple particles in his wake.

He was tired. He was so tired. It had to be the stress of the war. Or grief. Wrapping his arms around himself, he made his way back to his bedroom. Guards would find him soon enough.

Ranboo didn't know what he was seeing in his dreams, but they were just nightmares. Bad nightmares. It wasn't real, though. It couldn't be real.

He just wanted to sleep.

-

Everything in Wilbur still hurt like a bitch, which made sense seeing as he had gotten poisoned recently.

He hadn't been out of the medical ward, because they were "concerned for his safety" which was fair, but stupid, because like what, it wasn't like Wilbur would be getting worse.

He almost died, how much worse could you get from almost dead?

Worse, his security had been tight because well, assassin, but he was lonely and he wanted to talk to his siblings, but Techno hadn't visited him today, and Tommy hadn't come to visit since they had their talk that night.

Probably because Tommy was worried that he would kill him, but well ... actually, that was valid.

Stupid, but valid.

Fucking Tommy and his crying and his begging to get killed. Hopefully, his father hadn't actually ... done anything. Phil wouldn't. Phil *wouldn't*.

"Hey, Wil," Phil said, stepping into the room, "how are you feeling?" He made a non-committal noise back. "I'm sorry." The comfort was useless paired with Phil's next words. "I-we had some decisions to make. About the war and strategy." Phil continued. Half of Wilbur listened, and the other half processed.

He'd already known this was going to happen, but fucking hell. The country was going to war again. Wilbur hadn't lived in a war time country since he had been very young and his father was gaining his reputation.

The countries his father fought weren't there anymore, because Philza fucking crushed them. He had gotten Techno out of the deal, stolen from the underground pits in the country.

The underground pits that had led to the countries downfall, because if there king wasn't going to do anything about it, Philza fucking was.

His father was terrifying in war. Phil was a force of nature, and the battlefield was his domain. Techno was raised in it, and seemed to go into it as naturally as breathing. It was terrible to see, but he had faith that his family would (probably) return home alive. It was still a niggling thought, but Wilbur was able to push it off most of the time

Except Tommy. God Tommy. The SMP was his home, his *family*, and he was going to have to watch it all.

Would they leave him in the castle? Alone and unprotected from any of the people who, if they hadn't before, definitely harbored ill-will towards Tommy now? Would they take Tommy with them, if they ended up having to leave the capital? Would they all stay sequestered away, waiting for Dream to expend his resources?

Whatever they did, when the Antarctic empire went to war, Tommy would have to go with them.

It was a terrible position to put someone in, and Wilbur wished that they didn't have to do it, but what choice did he have? In the end, it was Phil's decision.

Wilbur didn't want to be sitting in a bed recovering from an assassination attempt, he wanted to be with the boy that he had pretty much adopted as a sibling in his head, despite knowing it was a stupid idea. He wanted Tommy to be safe, he wanted Techno to be safe, and he wanted his father to be able to stay home instead of going to war.

Wilbur didn't want this, but what choice did he have?

-

Tommy found it easier to keep himself distracted during the day, funnily enough. In daylight, he could keep himself busy, he could see Techno face to face, and know that the other was safe. Know the other wasn't going to hurt him. That *none of them* were going to hurt him.

Night was a different beast.

Nightmares came at night followed by doubts and anxieties and the crushing feeling of being trapped with people who were not his own.

Tommy was finally fucking alone, for one thing. He was finally alone, and it had never hurt worse. As much as Tommy didn't want to be surrounded by the people that were going to kill his family, he didn't want to be alone.

Even before, Dream separated him from his brothers. Why was he always alone?

Why

Was it him? With how often that Tommy was kept away, tossed aside, it ... it had to be at least somewhat Tommy. Dream wasn't a good person, Tommy could see that well enough with how Dream treated his brothers, but that didn't mean that he was wrong all of the time. Still.

Still.

It was somewhat Tommy's fault, wasn't it? Because messes wouldn't happen everywhere around Tommy, unless somehow, it was his fault that it was happening.

There was a reason he felt like this, and it was all his fucking fault. His brothers were too nice to say it, too loyal, but it was true. Maybe blinded, because once again, Dream was wrong. So often wrong. Just when it came to Tommy, he was correct and Tommy was a fucking useless waste of space.

His nights were full of demons, and the days were filled with directions and changes. He wasn't fucking *stupid*. He knew that everyone around him was preparing for war. He semi-

remembered a conversation that King Philza had with him, but the reality of it didn't really hit until he held a bag full of his things (did he pack it himself? Tommy didn't know) in front of one of the Antarctic's convoys.

In the king's words, they were "afraid someone would murder Tommy in retaliation" if they left him behind in the castle. Whether or not that was true wouldn't change anything for Tommy. He did his best not to think about it.

Tommy didn't think about a lot. None of the conclusions he came to were pleasant. It was better to zone out and ignore what was going on around him. Time didn't matter. There was nothing he was looking forward to anyways. Not anymore.

"Tommy!" Wilbur called, "You *have* to travel with me. Techno and Phil are going separately because they have to talk to the generals about *strategy* and shit." Wil's voice was tight with anxiety and stress, but he was clearly trying to keep the situation as light as possible.

"Okay." Tommy didn't have the energy to argue, even if he had wanted to. He was tired. If the journey was going to be long, he might as well have Wilbur by his side.

Unlike the trip to the Antarctic, this journey seemed ... short. Tommy was shielded from news and had only vague ideas of what caused the tightness in Wilbur's eyebrows. Little was seen of Phil and Techno. Tommy acted like that didn't bother him.

If nothing bothered him, nothing could hurt him. Tommy was fine. He was fine.

At least he was never by himself. Wilbur stuck by his side, almost like a guard, just like he had requested when they first started their ... campaign.

Except for tonight. Because Wilbur needed to be doing strategy and shit in a place where Tommy couldn't go.

(They didn't *trust* Tommy. Didn't want him around even after they knew his father was willing to let him *die*. Neither side needed him around.)

The noises of nature outside of the tent were unfamiliar. They could have been from the Antarctic territory or the SMP. Having not spent a lot of time outside of castles in either country, Tommy wouldn't know.

He was alone in the camp of the enemy, because everyone was Tommy's enemy now, and nobody wanted him.

So Tommy cried and time passed and he cried.

No one was around to see or care. If he couldn't have a pity party now, then when fucking could he?

"What the fuck do you think you're doing." Startled, Tommy looked up. It seemed he wasn't as alone as he had thought. Standing in the doorway of the tent was a man that Tommy didn't recognize. From his uniform, he was definitely one of the soldiers, though Tommy couldn't see well enough to tell if he had any rank.

Tommy curled around himself and glared at the intruder.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing," Tommy parroted.

"None of your business, *Prince* ." The soldier's stance was threatening, and Tommy squared his shoulders. Part of him wanted to reach for the ax Techno had given him, the other part knew that killing an Antarctic soldier would never go right for him.

The soldier threw the first punch, which Tommy took to the gut, knocking the wind out of him. Wow, yeah. He should have expected this. The man was clearly so angry, and Tommy was a seemingly easy conduit for that anger.

Tommy got the second hit, stunning the other man enough to run from the tent. If he was going to throw down with someone, he wasn't going to do it somewhere where he could destroy his only form of shelter.

Despite the soldier being a grown adult and far larger than Tommy, Tommy was holding his own pretty well.

"Hey." Tommy ignored the voice. Unless the soldier stopped swinging, Tommy wasn't going to stop either. "Break it up you two." Tommy dodged backwards, only to be dragged that direction anyways.

Rough hands grasped him from the back of the neck, firmly but not painfully so. Their other hand was against the collarbone of the man who attacked Tommy. Pink hair whipped in the wind into Tommy's face.

"I don't know what the hell is going on here," Techno said, voice unlike anything Tommy had heard come out of his mouth before, "But break it up. And you-" He narrowed his eyes towards the soldier. "If you touch him-or anyone-again I-" Tommy shivered in the wind against Techno's grip. "I will deal with you later." Techno guided Tommy away from the scene. The three had garnered some attention, but none of the bystanders followed Techno and Tommy.

"There's some stuff to patch you up in this tent," Techno said, still sounding pissed off, "Do you have anywhere you want to start with?" Tommy shook his head. "Alright then."

Techno started with Tommy's face, cleaning out the wounds clinically and applying bandages where necessary.

It was a small fight. Sure, Tommy might be a little bruised, but it wasn't that bad. Hell, Dream himself had done worse on good days.

"Thank you," Tommy said quietly when Techno finished cleaning up his face. Even if Techno hadn't dealt the damage, Tommy knew how these things went. Or maybe he didn't, and Tommy had been acting all wrong for the situation. "I can do it myself if you want."

“I don’t want to leave you alone again.” Tommy flushed, but didn’t argue. Right. Tommy was too dumb not to get into trouble while he was unattended. Or too violent to be left alone in the Antarctic’s camp. “What happened.” Tommy shrugged. Techno handed him some healing potion, and Tommy downed it. Being weaker for a little while outweighed the risk of being injured long-term.

“He barged into my tent pissed off,” Tommy said, “I guess I set him off? I don’t know.” Tommy knew that wasn’t a satisfactory answer.

“Unprovoked?” Tommy shrugged again.

“I guess,” Tommy said, “What can I say, I’m a provoking man.” Techno snorted at him.

“This hasn’t happened before, right?”

“Techno,” Tommy said, “Wouldn’t you or Wilbur realize if I was beat to Prime earlier.” Techno hummed.

“Yeah, but-” Techno inspected Tommy’s bruised stomach and winced. “No one’s like ... mean to you? Or causes problems?” Tommy shook his head. Even if people were, it wasn’t like he was about to tell Techno anyways.

He trusted Techno, to a certain extent, but complaining about something like that? Pointless, especially when there was no way to fix it.

Techno brushed his fingers under Tommy’s eyes, against the tear tracks gleaming. They were only slightly dulled by dust.

“Stay safe, Tommy,” Techno said, “I’ll send Wilbur in to check on you. I have matters to attend to.” The pat he gave Tommy was soft, like one that he would give Tommy when they were in the castle before Wilbur was almost assassinated. The look on Techno’s face was dark still, so Tommy didn’t risk responding.

-

The thing about getting beaten up was that you looked extra-pathetic to everyone.

Wilbur was almost a clingy bitch, and apparently, Tommy being injured made that worse. It wasn't even that bad of an injury, and Wilbur didn't have a duty as a host or whatever to keep Tommy comfortable anymore.

Wilbur looked resolute when he had first entered the tent-apparently Techno's *private tent, no wonder nobody followed them to watch*, but now he just looked soft and troubled. He kept petting Tommy's hair, even though it was grimy and gross.

"How have you been, Toms," Wilbur asked quietly, flopped beside Tommy on the mess Techno was using for a bed, "other than the-" he waved his arms vaguely at Tommy's everything.

"I'm fine," he answered quietly, "You, Wil?" The urge to revert to being cold and polite was strong, but Tommy couldn't very well call him Prince Wilbur when Wil was calling him *Toms*. He didn't like the vulnerability, but ... he liked the familiarity. He was sore and tired, and if he wanted to pretend like everything wasn't burning for a few minutes, could the universe just fucking let him?

"Not-" Wilbur sighed. "Probably better than you." There was silence. "Tommy-I-do you trust me?"

Tommy wanted to say no. Trusting anybody wasn't safe. It was wrong. It was inane to think that anybody would have Tommy's best interest at heart.

But Wilbur let him go in the city and comforted him after panic attacks and defended him after Tommy was accused of helping plot his assassination.

Tommy wanted just one thing from the universe (so many things, but for realism sake, he'd ask for one).

"Yeah." Wilbur sat up abruptly, staring down at Tommy. Tommy tensed, but stayed still.

"You shouldn't," Wil said, "Prime, Tommy I-you-they won't let me tell you."

"What." Tommy pushed himself up, flinching at the pain in his stomach and head as he did.
"What-Wilbur-"

"You know the SMP is weak from its war with the Badlands, correct?" Tommy nodded.
"Even in the capital, it is ... ill defended. Dream likely expected his assassination attempt to go as planned, and I guess he was too proud to back down. But, he can't-the SMP couldn't handle a siege on their capital-"

"So many people would die-"

"And definitely not an invasion," Wilbur finished.

"Surely not," Tommy said. He should have expected this. Hell, Tommy didn't know what he had been thinking other than that he clearly hadn't. Why did he think ignoring his problems would make them go away? Why did he act like just because Dream wanted him dead he didn't have a duty to his country?

Why did Dream attempting to kill Wil piss him off more than Dream's cavalier with Tommy's own life?

Wilbur smiled. It wasn't happy.

"I can't tell you more," Wilbur said, "it would be treason, you know. To spread military plans like that. But I'm sure we'll be a little set back after what happened today. Dad doesn't want you to get hurt, that's why he took you with us."

Tommy was upset. Tommy was tired.

“And Techno didn’t mean to drug you,” Wilbur said, “He just wanted you to feel better. There was no plan against you, Toms, I promise.” Tommy’s eyelids had been feeling steadily more heavy, and he wanted so badly to be upset at Wilbur, but he wasn’t. “You, of all people, know why Dream has to go down.” Tommy leaned into the warm hand that cradled his cheek.

As Tommy drifted to sleep, the only person he could direct the rage at was himself.

Chapter End Notes

...

:]

(Opinions? Feelings and thoughts and rage? probably not as much as Tommy, but you can tell me in the comments if you want)

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

tommy is a ball of emotions, tubbo is a ball of rage. nothing gets answered.

Chapter Notes

the reason this chapter is so short and took so long is because i'm a piece of shit. um. yeah. it's been over *checks notes* four months. sorry. the short answer is my brain hates me, i guess. if anyone was invested in this story, i'm really sorry. hopefully, the next one doesn't take too long.

on that note, thank you to anyone who's left comments/kudos. i appreciate the fuck out of you <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Trusting people was always a mistake. Everyone but Ranboo and Tubbo had betrayed him in the end, whether it was personal or not. Even Ranboo and Tubbo weren't enough to save him, by no fault of their own.

The Antarctic royal family kept him at camp. They left him at camp outside his own fucking capital city, his own homeland. They told him they'd keep him safe, cleaned his wounds, and it meant fucking *nothing*. Wilbur was the only one with the conscience to talk to Tommy about it.

The SMP was his home. When Tommy was young, the streets had been his his to roam and now some other fuckers (Phil and Techno and Wilbur, who Tommy liked, who were kind to Tommy even when they were allowed to hurt him) ripped everything away from him.

His brothers lived there. The people he would die for, the people (he thought) would die for him. Locked away in a besieged city.

Phil would probably kill his brothers, if they lost. Or maybe, even if they didn't lose. Maybe his brothers would fall in battle, maybe they'd fall hidden away in secret rooms, and be slaughtered anyway.

Maybe his brothers would be taken captive, but for what? What peace would Phil have to keep? It had already been shattered by the hand of the same person who gave Tommy a life when he was younger.

Phil who had agreed in the first place to take him from Dream. Techno who had agreed to take him away from home and bring him here. Wilbur, who was soft and kind and probably killing Tommy's citizens while Tommy was sleeping this morning. How could any of them really care for Tommy when there was nothing forcing them too.

Why the fuck did Tommy care about them when there was nothing forcing him too? Why did every solution he tried to come up with hurt his head?

Why did everything hurt so much

Tommy was torn. He wanted His city to be safe and defeat the people invading them.

But he wanted Techno and Wilbur and everyone to come home safe. He wanted them to live and prosper and wanted everything to be okay. Why did the people he loved have to be fighting? Why did Tommy have to choose?

War, in the lightest of possible terms, fucking sucked. Tommy wanted to destroy them, he wanted them to stay alive. He wanted the world, he wanted everything to fucking stop.

He needed to make everything stop.

Tommy's position was ... unique.

All Tommy knew was that after the war was over, his position was even more unsteady than it currently was. He couldn't be used as leverage now.

It didn't matter if he died. Tommy wasn't sure if it ever had.

Tommy just wanted to see his brothers, before he left. His world was ending anyways, wasn't it? Wilbur said he loved him, but he couldn't. Techno and Phil were nice, and they promised protection, but was that true? Could Tommy bet his life on it?

Tommy's own likability was not something he was going to risk his life on.

Tommy knew how to be quiet. He had grown up with no attention to him, only shushes and he knew how to be quiet in order to get what he wanted.

Tommy could be smart about this. That was how Tommy had grown up. He had started with minders that hadn't watched him very well, too focused on his far more important siblings. The guards in the Antarctic's camp certainly weren't like the babysitters Tommy had had back in his old home, but they did have one thing in common.

Neither of them were looking out for Tommy specifically.

So Tommy snuck out. Not like a kid sneaking out to the square while his parents were asleep, but he liked to think, like a thief, because that was what Tommy *was*. He stole places and names and identities, and somehow that landed him the position of the prince of the SMP, but he wasn't born to it and it wasn't his to have.

He hated himself for that. He hated it. Soon enough, there probably wouldn't be anything left of himself to hate. His life was forfeit at this point. He might as well go out trying to accomplish something.

He didn't dress in anything overtly Antarctic Empire. He could not bring himself to betray them wearing their own colors. It would be disgusting. It would be wrong.

Tommy didn't want to fight anyone, but he couldn't just stand here, while he knew that the people getting starved and slaughtered in the siege were his own people. The ones he had sworn responsibility to under the eaves of his father's court. The sun had shown down on him like a halo, and he had promised, to Prime, under the light of the sun, that he was a servant of his people and would do anything for them.

And now, Tommy needed to own up.

Tommy didn't want to fight the people that housed him either, but Tommy couldn't exactly sit and do nothing. It would be wrong. Everything felt wrong. He was pretty sure that he would never be able to save anyone.

He could try. How could he stand and wait? But Tommy couldn't do anything. He was too stupid to think of a plan,

He kind of wanted to cry.

He couldn't wear any clothes of his hometown, because if he got caught sneaking out of the camp, he would be killed immediately as a traitor, and Tommy, selfish, selfish Tommy didn't want to die, even if he deserved it. Even when he deserved to. God, he was a bastard.

(A bastard who might get to see his brothers before he died, though, so Tommy would accept the title)

Tommy didn't belong with anyone anymore. He was nobody's. Nobody's but his own.

If he was going to die, it was going to be selfishly, but it was going to be for this country, come hell or high water. His people deserved better than what they had gotten under Dream. They deserved better than what Tommy could give them.

Tommy crept out of his tent, the scent of blood and fire fresh in the air. Oh. it was going to be hell then.

As he neared the walls, Tommy made sure to be especially careful. He did not want to get murdered by his own people. The Antarctic Empire hadn't managed to get past the walls but well ...

Phli didn't know the walls like Tommy did. When he was younger and it was peaceful and Tommy wasn't even a prince yet, he played here. Almost cracked his skull open more than a few times, but Tommy knew the walls.

He knew the city. Little infrastructure had been changed, thanks to Dream, only updated.

And once he was a prince, he got to know the defenses in a way he never had before. All combined, Tommy could get in probably better than the Empire's best trained spies and soldiers. Home turf advantage and all that. (Also, the advantage of having been given a very good education, and Ranboo. Ranboo knew things that no one had any business knowing. As well as Tubbo, who was just straight up terrifying.)

Thankfully, he managed to creep in without dying.

No one had noticed him (although it had been so close, after Tommy had just managed to get into the city and feel the ground beneath his feet. It had been so close). Now, with the soil of the SMP beneath him and the familiar streets of home *home-god he never thought that he would be here again* -Tommy felt alive.

He knew that he could die, but ... wasn't that inevitable anyways? So what did it matter?

Once he was passed being suspiciously close to the walls, Tommy continued hiding, but less ... conspicuously. If anyone caught him, he wanted them to think that he was just breaking curfew rather than sneaking in from the Antarctic Empire's camp.

Thankfully, he wasn't caught. Still. It was probably stupid to push his luck. So he was going to be as careful as he possibly could.

The square was quiet (it smelled wrong, but it was home, this was Tommy's home, and it was going to burn. He just wanted to say goodbye).

Tommy crept by it quietly. There was a statue of his father, of him and his brothers, though they had all been much younger when the statue was created. In it, every one of them looked a little angelic. It wasn't very true to life. Tommy wished he could just sit by one of the fountains and wait for the sun to rise.

He kept walking.

The one thing Tommy knew better than anything else was the SMP castle grounds. Even his time away couldn't fade his memory. The whole country may have been home, but that was his house. He literally just. Lived there. Of course he knew the ins and outs, if anyone would, it was him.

And Ranboo. And Tubbo. But they were ... occupied, presumably. Surely, Dream wouldn't have let them on the front lines, he hadn't when they went to war with the badlands, even though Tubbo was technically of age now. Surely, his brothers would be stressed, but very much at home. Tearing their hair out over their father's stupid decisions and assassination plots, but unharmed.

Tommy should have known something was off by the lack of guards patrolling outside the castle wing that would hold his brothers. (assassins are known to creepily crawl into the windows and stab unsuspecting princes and all that). But Tommy was too blinded with a slight bit of excitement that he might see his brothers, so he didn't catch it.

The room was dark and made up as if one of the servants had come through and cleared it. It had life in it still-it was still undeniably Tubbo, but it was empty.

Was he ... in Ranboo's room?

Tommy crept out of Tubbo's, the well oiled door making hardly any noise and padded down the hall of his childhood home. It was odd to go around so cautiously, when he used to run and scream and play down these halls. It was odd, but nothing had really made sense since he had been brought in front of his family's court.

It would, soon. Once the war was over or the SMP won or Tommy died. Then everything would make sense again and Tommy would feel okay.

Until then, he'd-

A cool hand graced across his shoulder, and Tommy shivered. He hadn't even heard the person come on him. He hadn't even realized. God, he was stupid. Fuck fuck fuck him. Fuck everything. He was going to die.

"Tommy," Dream said, "Mm, I don't think you're supposed to be here." Tommy felt his stomach fall and reflex kicked in before the rest of his brain did. He knew how to survive Dream.

Tommy dropped to his knees and bowed, muscle memory from every single day of his fucking life kicking in to protect him. He had to respect Dream. If he wanted to get treated alright, he needed to obey. He'd already messed up. He already did something wrong. He was a fool. A fucking idiot, for getting used to life in the Antarctic Empire.

Dream laughed. It was one of the worst sounds that Tommy had ever heard.

"Who are you betraying by being in here," Dream asked, his tone sounding more like he was making fun of Tommy than seriously thinking that he would be able to do anything against him. "Everyone? Still the same selfish bastard you were before?"

"I'm sorry, sir," Tommy said, and Dream only made a disgusted noise. As he should be. Tommy was ... Tommy shouldn't be here. He had been taken away for a reason, Dream didn't want him, why was he here, why did he think this was a good idea, why did he think that he deserved to see Tubbo and Ranboo why ...

“Sorry doesn’t cut it, Tommy,” Dream said, “Do you know all of the suffering you’ve caused?” But-wait, Tommy hadn’t-he hadn’t even done anything. The whole point was that he was useless-he couldn’t do anything how could- “Do you, Theseus? Since you’ve come into my household, you have been nothing but a burden and a pest, and now you’ve cost people their lives.” Dream was silent for a moment.

You brought me here, Tommy wanted to shout. His throat dried up though, and nothing came out.

“Stand up, Tommy.” Tommy obeyed without question. He almost felt like he wasn’t even controlling himself. All he knew was how to handle Dream, and that he had to obey until he was gone and do whatever he had to do to listen.

Anything.

“Come along, Tommy,” Dream said, “I don’t want you interfering with anything. Ever again.” And Tommy shook, but he followed Dream along. There was a hand on his neck guiding his every move, but Tommy would have done it anyway.

Dream didn’t take him far. It was one of the guest rooms, but it was ... not prepared for a guest. Most of the furniture had been removed (although the bed was still there). It was cold. There were no windows, no fireplace, nothing to keep out or let in the cold.

“You are going to stay in here until you are useful,” Dream said, “You are not to leave, for anything. What you have in here should be enough for you, and guards will bring you food when you deserve it.”

“Thank you,” Tommy said, because that was what you did when people-when Dream gave you things.

“For ...”

“For being generous,” Tommy said, falling into old habits, “For giving me a room even when

I don't deserve it. For being merciful." He didn't mean a fucking word, but Dream liked making him do the whole song and dance.

Dream smiled, not a happy smile, but a smile all the same. Good. Tommy did something good for once.

"Of course, Tommy," Dream said, "Be good for your guards, like you would for me, alright? I've got to go." Dream took one last look at Tommy. "I've got some business elsewhere."

Dream stepped out of the room and Tommy was alone.

There was a clock on the wall. It showed time was passing, but Tommy didn't really feel it. All the clock was to him was the hands spinning slowly, slowly, in a game of chase. He went over to the bed and considered it. Should he sleep in it? He wasn't given permission by Dream ... but ...

... no he couldn't act out, just because he had gotten used to it. Couldn't act out just because Tubbo and Ranboo weren't here to get hurt in his stead. He couldn't just ... misbehave. He was here for a reason. He was lucky to be here. The Antarctic Empire wouldn't have kept him around or alive much longer. But that wasn't true, that wasn't ... *true*, or was it? The Antarctic Empire didn't start this war, Dream did, unless they were lying to him but Will nearly died and Techno taught him to fight and why would someone go through all that much trouble for Tommy when they could have just killed him.

They were the enemy. Tommy shouldn't trust them. He shouldn't trust anybody

Tommy sat on the bed.

Fuck.

He forgot how foggy his thoughts got around Dream.

Tommy didn't want to think, but

No.

No, he came here to do something.

Tommy might have been too useless to protect his country, but he could still give into his selfish desires.

He was going to see his brothers or he would die trying. It wasn't like Tommy would be alive much longer after all. If Dream won, he'd be slaughtered (he might be dead before the end of the war entirely), and if the Antarctic won, surely, they'd kill him. If they weren't going to before, they would now that he'd run away. He would have run out of use, after all.

It seemed like he had run out of use for everyone, really.

He heard footsteps in the hallway, and Tommy got off of the bed. Just in case.

The man who opened the door was fucking armed. Like he was expecting Tommy to just attack him. The man was also not dressed in the typical armor that a person serving in the royal guard would be wearing.

A stranger.

"Prince Theseus?" the man said with a fairly irreverent tone. Tommy looked up.

"Tommy is fine," he said, because he would rather be called his own name disdainfully than the one that had been put on him.

The stranger actually smiled.

“Tommy then,” the man said, “I’d advise you to obey me or I’ll have to kill you.”

His guard then.

Tommy nodded and looked past him.

He had never been in a cell before, and this cell was so much nicer than what he deserved. But Tommy would be fine.

Tommy had been determined to stay quiet, but he just. Couldn't. Not forever. Not for long. The urge to speak crept up on him

Tommy did his best not to talk, but when it came to Tommy and anxiety, there was one thing that he did without fail.

It was how he had gotten close to Wilbur, it was why he started talking to Wilbur in the first place, and it was how he met Tubbo and inevitably ended up in the SMP royal family.

Tommy talked when he was nervous. Clearly, in dire citations, he could control it, but it was the reason for getting in trouble many times, but he never could quite manage to stop. He hated it. It was a terrible, terrible thing, but as much as it had gotten him in trouble, the blustering confidence had occasionally saved him, so he couldn't completely spite it.

“You aren't from the guards, are you?” Tommy asked, eventually, hoping that the guard (Punz, they had said, right? Tommy was pretty sure that was their name)

Hoping that the man wouldn't hit him or report this to Dream. After all, Tommy hadn't exactly gotten permission to talk, he just ... did.

"I'm not," Punz said, "I was hired ... separately. Nothing personal, just business being business. The King pays well, I like being paid well." Nothing personal. Great. Ruining Tommy's life and chances of seeing his brothers again was nothing personal to this guy. Alright. Great.

"And you couldn't look the other way and let me ..." Tommy glanced towards the door. Punz shook his head.

"Not looking to get myself hurt."

"You don't want to get hurt? So you went into the business of being a hired goon?"

Punz stared at Tommy. He was probably going off the rails. That was pretty common. It had been a weird few days. Tommy was due his going off the rails arc.

"I like money," Punz said, shrugging. There was something dishonest in his eyes. Something that Tommy could pick at.

Tommy was raised in a court of vipers, and while his father might not like him, he had trained him like he would any other prince of the SMP. Tommy knew manipulation, not well, but he knew it.

"See, Punz," Tommy said, "The thing you should know about my father is he isn't. A gentle man, if you will. And he isn't particularly merciful. Just because he promises something, doesn't mean he will pull through"

"He follows his word well enough," Punz said, "And he'd been forgiving so far. Tommy shrugged.

"When he has too," Tommy said, "Has he paid you yet?" Punz looked ... uncertain for a moment.

“I’ve been paid,” Punz said, “I always get my pay up front. Or I don’t work.” Tommy nodded.

“Wise, wise, but,” Tommy said, “There’s the other thing.” Punz jaw clenched.

“Yes, there’s the ... other thing.”

Tommy nodded.

“You have no way of knowing who is going to come out on top here,” Tommy said, “I’m not sure where you’re from, but there’s a bit of a war going on here, I’m sure you’ve noticed.”

“I’m not fucking stupid,” Punz said, looking at Tommy curiously, as if he was trying to figure out where Tommy was going.

“What if I told you I had people on both sides,” Tommy said, “And you’d be far better off protecting me than keeping me in.” Tommy looked at Punz. “Dream cares for nothing, not even his word when it’s to his advantage to ignore it. You seem like you’re good at your job.” Tommy paused. “I’d hate for Dream to keep using leverage over you.”

“I’ve considered my chances, Tommy,” Punz said, something in his voice still sounding off, “But for now ...”

Tommy sighed and resigned himself to the four walls of his fancy little cell.

-

Tubbo wasn’t wearing any armor.

That was probably the worst part of this whole thing.

He was standing in a room strategizing with ... without the top generals, because George and Sapnap were far away, and Tubbo hadn't seen them in so long. It would be forever, and by then, who was to say that Tubbo wouldn't be dead.

Wow, okay. That was ... that was not positive.

But it was hard to be positive when you were talking with people about whether it was better to minimize the casualties or to win faster. What would be better? Tubbo really didn't like that his decisions could be directly leading to people's deaths. It was a little horrifying to him. Vaguely, he knew that this was a job that could have been regulated to him at any point, and a job that he had been trained for, but reading cold numbers in a history book was far different than looking at a division of men that might die because of him.

They were busy, and then Ranboo went missing, and everything was a mess, and there was no time. So Tubbo didn't have any armor on. He really should have had armor on.

Because with war, who was to say when the enemy would attack.

There was shouting outside of the walls. Tubbo couldn't ignore it. He shouldn't ignore it. That was-

Oh god.

He was going to have to-

There wasn't time for armor. Tubbo didn't even think about it in the moment. All he knew was that he needed to get his weapon ready, and he needed to figure out what was going on. He was these people's prince. He was in charge of them. He should be out there with them.

He could only hope that Ranboo was in the inner part of the camp, alive and well, and that whoever was around him wouldn't let him out. Please. Not Ranboo too.

Ranboo had to be safe. After his ... episode, he'd gotten a little more distanced, but surely, he was alright.

Tubbo couldn't look at the fighting. He had to look, but he couldn't look. Even from a distance, he could see the terror. Oh god. He wanted to die. No, he didn't want to die. He didn't want to be here, but he promised, and these people were part of the reason that Tommy was dead.

Tubbo wanted to hit the royal family, destroy them. . He'd go down, if it meant getting rid of everyone else. The royal family. Then Dream. Because that way, Tubbo could make sure that this didn't happen again.

An eye for an eye, a son for a son. Tubbo was going to make them regret what they did to Tommy.

Tubbo just had to get down from the balcony. He wasn't in fighting range, couldn't even hope to reach any one from here, and worse of all, he could hardly hear his soldiers.

Could hardly hear what was probably the sounds of death.

Unfortunately for Tubbo, the high ground wasn't of much use. It only made him an easier target.

He felt the burning before he even realized that something was going to hit him.

Explosions were all Tubbo could hear. All he knew were explosions and pain, and then he was gone and knew no more.

-

Technoblade wouldn't say he was the angriest person ever. He definitely wasn't the most blood thirsty.

Chat fucking was though. His chat had a tendency to take over when everything got too much, and they were pretty fond of ... blood. Anyone's blood.

So when he saw a ranking officer of the SMP up on the balcony, Technoblade shot him before he could kill any of his soldiers. It was normal.

He wasn't expecting chat to scream.

Tubbo??

Blood for the Blood god

Tubbo's gone

Tommy's going to be so pissed

They were all so loud and layering over each other. It was overwhelming and Technoblade momentarily forgot where he was.

He was brought back when someone stabbed him in the leg and then ... then nothing. Nothing at all.

“Prince Technoblade?” Someone called, sounding like they were in the air or something. “Sir?”

Finally, Techno raised his head.

“Heh?”

“Sir, are you alright?” Technoblade failed to respond again. “I think maybe we should get you to the medic.”

Technoblade didn’t really come to for a while. He knew they were treating his injuries and his leg. He knew at some point that a message had been sent to Philza, he knew that he fell asleep and woke up and was fed, but he wasn’t really aware until Wilbur walked into his room. Wilbur, who wore a sword at his side, but no armor because he *wasn’t meant to be here, what part of not leaving Tommy behind did he not get.*

“Techno,” Wilbur said, sounding far too on edge for someone who’s injured brother had actually woken up, “Are you feeling better?”

“Wilbur, what’s wrong?” Wilbur avoided Techno’s eyes. “Wilbur, what happened? You’re just going to make me more anxious waiting.

“Tommy’s gone,” Wilbur said, “Apparently, he ran away from his tent. He’s missing.” Techno felt his heart clench a little bit. If Tommy was missing, it meant that he was in danger. They might be close to his home, but they were at war.

“Oh.” Technoblade could hear the roughness in his own voice, but couldn’t bring himself to care.

“Yeah,” Wilbur said, “I don’t know what the chances of finding him are, even if we take the country. If someone stole him-or-or.”

“... he ran away?”

“Yeah,” Wilbur said, “I don’t know if we’re going to find him.”

“If we take the city, we could ban travel,” Technoblade said, “No one can really get out ‘cause of the fancy little siege we’ve got here. They’re trying, but honestly? None of their military power is here.”

“Yeah, and have you heard? Their leadership is in shambles. You shot one of their princes, and no one’s seen the king.”

“One of their princes,” Techno repeated.

“Yeah, one of their-oh fuck.” Wilbur said, probably coming to the realization that Wilbur did at the same time.

“Yeah.” Silence held.

“You fucking shot one of Tommy’s brothers?” Wilbur said.

“I didn’t know it was his brother. And he was going to kill people. Of course I shot him.”

“It’s war, we’re all killing people.”

“Exactly!”

“Exactly!”

Wilbur sighed. Technoblade slumped against the cot that he had been sleeping on.

“I hate this.”

“I’m pretty sure everyone does.”

“I’m going back,” Techno said. His leg hardly hurt-it had been a graze really. Even if it was more serious, Wilbur wouldn’t know that, and if Techno’s soldiers were fighting, he was going to be with them, “Chat will cause me more pain sitting here than my leg will,” he added, before Wilbur could protest. “I am going back. They’re weak. This isn’t going to last for much longer.”

“Dad would stop you,” Wilbur said quietly.

“Dad isn’t here,” Techno said, “and the sooner this is over, the sooner we find out what happened to Tommy.” Wilbur had no argument for that.

“Rest for the night,” Wilbur told him, “If something happens because you don’t wait out to make sure you’re actually okay-” Techno understood the look in Wilbur’s eyes.

“Okay. A night,” Techno promised.

Chapter End Notes

heyyyyy

i-yeah?? honestly, i have a lot of thoughts, but i'm starting school tomorrow (if you have college advice, give it pls <3) and my brain is fried. thank you for reading, if you got here lol. if this sucks, i'll fix it when my brain starts happening again

one of the things that actually got me to write was a cool discord server!
<https://discord.gg/M8prCzTBNb>

(Comments? Ramblings? lil scribbles? heaven forbid typos that make it impossible to read? Let me know, I can't bite through the screen :((

i'm not paranoid i'm a realist (i know you're gonna kill me)

Chapter Summary

techno and tubbo have a chat. tubbo is pressurized older sibling rage.

ranboo is still missing, who knows what happened to him (couldn't be me)

Chapter Notes

...

i dont know if anyone's still going to read this but here's a small update. i hope you enjoy <3

going to ramble for a bit, but feel free to skip!! anyways, i'm really sorry about how long it took to update this. basically, i started school the day after my last update and it turns out some stem classes make me want to fucking die so that's fun. i guess. um. it hasn't been great for my mental health and editing ROB felt overwhelming so i didn't work on the story very much. I'm really sorry about that, and i hate leaving things unresolved. i will finish this story, if it means throwing the flaming mess of three (?) different versions of the same scene in here if i must (i will do my best not to do that). if i try to make the update longer, i will just procrastinate for another six months, and i don't really want that to happen.

anyways, if you read that whole mess (or your eyes just skipped down here o/) i hope your day goes well (or gets better). you're important, and you deserve to have good days

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

For a while, Tubbo only knew pain. He could not remember his name or why he hurt so much. He could only wish for the hurt to disappear or his body to pass to where nothing would feel anymore. It would be a relief to have it gone even for a moment.

For some reason, his body wouldn't give him the cold relief of unconsciousness. Each moment was excruciating until his people brought him to a medic.

A few hours later, he was more lucid. The healers could communicate with him well enough to know he was willing to risk the effects of a regen potion. His injuries were severe, and the potion would not heal him, but it would be enough for him to go back on the field, granted that his right eye was covered along with most of his face.

Tubbo had a duty.

A day after Tubbo probably lost half of his face (it was far too early to tell, maybe he'd just get a massive scar), he returned to the battlefield. The infirmary's were overrun, after all, and the people needed a leader.

Tubbo wasn't much of a leader, but he was what the SMP had right now. Half his face was covered in bandages, and he hadn't even told anyone about the slight ringing in his ears. In the grand scheme of things, how important was it really? After all, he had a war to win.

The battle was clearly being lost, though. If the horrors he saw at the infirmary didn't show Tubbo that, then what the SMP was passing as their front lines surely did.

Morale was shit. Conditions were shit. Their chances of winning were shit.

Tubbo could hardly see, much less make decent decisions, but he knew enough to know that the fight was not going to end well for his country.

They'd already lost Tommy. Tubbo shouldn't let anyone else lose their kid. Maybe that was why when they got caught in a stalemate-he had been afraid of pushing their lines.

Tubbo did try. Despite everything that he'd ever been taught, Tubbo had never been trained in what to do if there was an invasion in his own capital. His education wasn't complete, and now it would probably never be. He wasn't enough, and he was going to lose.

He should minimize the loss, right? Or should he fight until he was destroyed, leaving someone else with the growing burden of a fallen nation.

In the end, it didn't matter. A half-educated prince who'd never gone to war couldn't defeat what was probably the best general in the Antarctic outside of its own royal family.

Tubbo was not going to win, so the best he could do was minimize losses. For some reason, the Antarctic's general deigned to meet with him. It was a chance he couldn't ignore at this point.

They met on as neutral ground as they could—this was an invasion on Tubbo's homeland by his brother's murderers. There was no neutral ground.

The talk was going ... badly. Tubbo had nothing to leverage over the heads of the Antarctic, and he didn't even have the benefit of the full military force.

"Surrender," the enemy general said, "surrender, or everyone here dies. You aren't going to win. Do you really want to fight to the last man?"

Tubbo thought of what his father would do, if Tubbo surrendered. The man would rage. Dream wouldn't be able to fight, not without his army besides him, but he'd be so pissed at Tubbo. And there was no guarantee that anyone Tubbo loved would survive Dream's rage, not even Ranboo, if he was still alive.

The people would survive if he surrendered. Probably. Tubbo would die either way, but everyone didn't have to.

"I surrender," Tubbo said, before calling for his men to stand back and drop any weapons. Their hands were up. Tubbo himself unclipped his scabbard and let it fall to the floor. It was the only weapon he'd brought with him. He looked at the floor and knelt.

That was as official of a surrender that Tubbo could do, without being the actual king, without paper and a pen to sign his kingdom away. As a general, it was his right.

“I accept,” the Antarctic’s general said, approaching Tubbo. Tubbo trembled, but he couldn’t move. Couldn’t make himself stop. Couldn’t control himself. He’d already lost his brother to the war and possibly his eyes. He wasn’t ready to lose more.

There were arms around his shoulders.

“Can you stand?” the man asked, and Tubbo could only shake his head. “If I support you, will you be able to stand?” Oh.

He’d almost prefer if the enemy were to kick him.

Bracing himself on the man, Tubbo was able to stand. His legs still felt impossibly weak but he was standing.

“I need you to call off the rest of your soldiers,” the other man said, “We don’t want any more bloodshed.”

It was humiliating. It was terrible, but the enemy was being merciful and none of Tubbo’s surrendered soldiers had been killed yet. Tubbo himself hadn’t been killed on the spot. Messengers were sent at Tubbo’s orders, while Tubbo himself led the enemy through the heart of his country.

They entered the castle without any problems. The word spread through the messengers that Tubbo had sent through the city.

“So,” the general said, “have you seen your brother?”

“Hm,” Tubbo thought for a moment. He would absolutely lie about where he saw his younger brother if it gave Ranboo the slightest chance of making it out. “I think Prince Ranboo was closer to the front lines. He’ll probably hear of the surrender by now, so he should-”

“Not Prince Ranboo,” the general said, “the other one. Theseus.” Tubbo felt rage burn in his bones. This man was a general of some kind from the Antarctic Empire. He of all people should know where his brother was.

“Theseus is dead,” Tubbo said, not even bothering to hide his rage. Anyone who wasn’t expecting his rage was stupid, and what, was it going to get Tubbo killed? Who fucking cared at this point. He had already lost his country.

(Tubbo cared.)

He already lost one of his brothers. Possibly two, and he didn’t even know where Dream was.

The man beside him paused, a look of what seemed to be devastation crossing his face before it returned to neutral.

“How did he die?” What the fuck? Could this man get any more disrespectful?

“Your country executed him?” Tubbo said, rage seeping into his voice despite how hard he was trying to be as neutral as the man besides him. “Why do you think we fucking went to war?”

The man beside him fucking paused again. Wow, he should really stop doing that unless he wanted Tubbo to fucking murder him. Oh, Tubbo surrendered? Who fucking cared, Tubbo would probably die anyways. What the fuck. He would stab this man.

“I think,” The man started, “that there’s been a miscommunication. Your country tried to kill my brother.”

“Who even is your brother?” Tubbo said, “one of the soldiers? Because if so, we are at war-”

“The crown prince of the Antarctic Empire,” The man said, “His name is Wilbur.”

Wait.

Wait.

Fuck .

What the fuck. If his brother was the crown prince, that would make him ...

“Prince Technoblade,” Tubbo said, “I am *sorry* , I did not recognize you earlier.” *You prick*, Tubbo didn’t say. Sucking up was important for damage control.

“We didn’t kill Tommy.”

“Of course, your highness,” Tubbo said. He was going to rip this guy apart. What was the point of a farce? To make their conquering seem justified?

“We didn’t,” the man kept insisting, and alright, maybe Tubbo would murder him happily.

“I didn’t disagree,” Tubbo said instead of shoving a knife through Technoblade’s thigh. He should have kept a knife on him when he surrendered. Technoblade sighed.

“Okay, what do *you* think is happening here?” Tubbo thought for a moment. He was tired as shit of mind games, and he was tired just in general. There was nothing left to protect—no one left to protect.

“I am leading you through the city to the castle and you are kind of parading me-”

“I meant the whole battle thing, not that.”

“Someone framed the SMP for an assassination attempt,” Tubbo said, “You murdered my youngest brother and declared war. A very fast war. And now you’ve won. I will sign the surrender papers myself when we reach the castle, as a proxy for my father”

“No,” Technoblade said, “no that isn’t-That’s not what happened.” Tubbo couldn’t quite refrain from raising an eyebrow. “The attack was definitely legitimate-I-do you want to see the official declaration of war that was sent to us? And Tommy isn’t dead, he just ran away.”

Tubbo stared.

“You lost my dead brother.”

“He isn’t dead,” Technoblade said, “he can’t be dead. He’s just-we left him at the camp, because we didn’t want him to see his city and y’know. We aren’t that cruel. And he left.”

Oh.

Tubbo thought. Honestly, Technoblade could easily be lying. Tubbo had no way of knowing that he wasn’t. On the other hand, though, why the fuck would he lie? Like, Tubbo already surrendered. Unless he just wanted to hurt Tubbo, but yet again, he hadn’t really done that.

“Of course, you highness,” Tubbo settled on, not daring to give himself hope.

Chapter End Notes

skdfls, i hope it was interesting to read, if nothing else.

also!! since i don't really have anyone to tell this to, i'm going to see lovejoy when they come to around my home later this year so that's cool

kudos and comments are food to me, they do something to my brain fr

be gentle with yourself and have a good day <3

(bizarre typos? you're lost on the story line? feel free to let me know)

End Notes

...oops

(typos? in my hastily typed chapter? it's more likely than you think. pls tell)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!